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WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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*Published 1913*

TO

MADAME OLGA PETROVNA STURK

# FOREWORD

I HAVE to thank Mr. A. G. Gardiner for his courtesy in allowing me to reprint the two "Tales Dmitri told Me," and to make use of one or two other pieces which originally appeared in the *Daily News*. I have also to acknowledge my indebtedness to an admirable paper on the life of Mme Breshkovsky by Mr. Ernest Poole, which first appeared in the American *Outlook*. The setting of the two folk-tales referred to above is imaginary. With this exception I have tried to record incidents and conversations faithfully.

R. R.

ETTAL, BAVARIA,
*Michaelmas*, 1912.

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# MY RUSSIAN YEAR

## CHAPTER I

### THE LAND OF IDEALS

A GREAT picture of the Virgin and Child hangs in the custom-house at Virballen, with a little lamp flickering before it.

The foreigner, who was a few minutes before on the German side of the frontier and stands on Russian soil for the first time, looks at the shrine with curiosity. Porters are hurrying in with luggage, and travellers are chattering in half a dozen languages. An official at a desk in the middle of the great hall is examining passports. A man is protesting that he did not know that playing cards were contraband. A woman is radiant; for the dirty lining she has sewn in a new Paris hat has deceived the inquisitors. Everybody is in a hurry to be through with the business and free to lunch in the adjoining restaurant before going on to St. Petersburg. It is a strange

home for the majestic Virgin of the Byzantine picture.

Here, at the threshold of the Empire, Russia placards—St. Paul's vivid Greek gives me the word—her faith before the eyes of all comers. In the bustle of a custom-house, charged with fretfulness and impatience and meanness, Russia sets forth her belief in a life beyond the grave and her conviction that the ideals presented by the picture are the noblest known to mankind.

A foreigner might live a year in England and learn nothing of the religious life of the English people. In Russia religion forces itself on the attention. The icon is its chief medium of advertisement. The stiff figure of a saint, with hand raised in benediction, gleams in the angle of the walls of rooms in hotels and private houses. These holy pictures, reminiscent of the religious struggles of the Court of Leo the Isaurian or Leo the Armenian, are to be seen everywhere: in the streets, in railway stations, in restaurants, post offices, shops, public baths, prisons, Government offices. They persistently turn the minds of Christian and infidel alike to the creed they accept or deny. They hold up to good and bad the ideal aimed at or flouted. They encourage the conquering, spur the faltering, shame the vanquished.

St. Petersburg is the least Russian and the most

cosmopolitan city in the Empire; but nobody living there can escape the warning that he has no abiding city and must seek another. The *Novoe Vremya* comes with the coffee and rolls in the morning. One glances at the front page to see which theatre or cabaret is likely to afford the best entertainment in the evening. Cheek by jowl with the theatrical advertisements are a couple of columns devoted to the interests of the inhabitants of the other world. An obscure general or a favourite actress has died and the public is asked to pray for their souls. Their relations give notice that dirges will be sung in the death-chamber at eleven, five, and ten until the day of the burial. The officers of the general's regiment have arranged that a requiem shall be sung in the garrison church. The members of the clubs and societies he belonged to make similar announcements. The relations of the actress, the directors of the theatre at which she played, the committee of a literary society and a theatrical club request her friends and the general public to attend services for the repose of her soul. Other advertisements announce services on the seventh day after a death, or the fortieth day, or a dirge to be sung on the anniversary of a death.

"Where are the dead?" asks Myltyl, in the graveyard.

"There are no dead," answers Tyltyl.

The reply seemed an affectation in the Haymarket and a commonplace in Moscow.

My peaceful consumption of coffee and perusal of the papers is disturbed by a horrible odour which has crept by subtlety into the room. I make inquiries and am told that the concierge, contrary to orders, is frying fish in sunflower oil, because it is a fast day, and I sit down and write a note to inform the landlord that I shall be forced to leave my flat if he be unable to control the religious practices of his servants.

Driven from the house, I meet the charming Marya Alexandrovna, whom I had seen at the opera the night before. She asks me if I like her new hat, and tells me that she is going to the Kazan Cathedral to pray, as she is house-hunting.

On the locked door of the General Post Office a notice confronts me, stating that the place was closed at eleven o'clock on religious grounds and will not be opened until the following morning. The student, stranded in distant Kieff, must wait another day for the twenty roubles I want to send him.

Coming home, I nearly fall over a man who is kneeling on the pavement to say his prayers before an icon, glittering on the wall between a tobacconist's shop and a greengrocer's.

In Russia God and His Mother, saints and angels, seem near; men rejoice or stand ashamed

beneath their gaze. The people of the land have made it a vast sanctuary, perfumed with prayer and filled with the memories of heroes of the faith. Saints and sinners, believers and infidels, are affected by its atmosphere; and so it has come about that Russia is the land of lofty ideals. In the West ideals have been lowered by the exercise of common sense. The man in the street does not regret that he has not the courage to become a fool for the sake of the Gospel or of Socialism. The soul of a Trappist monk is a sealed book to the average Englishman, and it does not occur to him that an anarchist who shoots at a king may have a character of rare beauty. The Russian understands and reverences the man or woman who loses his life to gain it.

St. Seraphim is the most popular saint in modern Russia and Marya Spiridonova the most popular heroine. Neither of them would be popular in England. Seraphim left the world to live alone in the heart of the forest and pray. The rustics who discovered his savage retreat towards the end of the eighteenth century found that he was wise, and that it was prudent to act on his advice. Who will give us counsel when you are gone, they asked? "Come and whisper your questions by my grave," he answered, "and God will answer them." And so he died, having never done anything which the modern world would consider

useful. Yet his canonization was greeted with enthusiasm from one end of Russia to the other, and rich and poor placed his icon in their homes. The nation followed with sympathetic interest the long journey of Nicholas II., the Tsaritza, and their Court to the northern forest, far from cities and railways, where the bones of the old man lay. The man in the street considered it natural that the monarch should desire to do homage to holiness.

"After all," said an Englishman, "one has to admit that the Trappists of Algeria have done useful work in planting eucalyptus trees."

The pursuit of arboriculture would not enhance the value of a recluse's life in the estimation of a Russian. He venerates Seraphim because he tamed the flesh and learnt to speak with God.

Conviction of the splendour of self-sacrifice is not confined to the Christians of Russia; it is shared with them by unbelievers. The glory of renunciation is the theme of a song of the Russian revolution.

There is a gallows in the courtyard of a prison, and an assassin, a pest of society or a hero, the term chosen must depend on the point of view, is brought out to be hanged. From the cells of a hundred political prisoners floats out into the darkness the lovely wail of this song of self-sacrifice—

"You gave up all, freedom and honour and

life itself; farewell, brother, you have nobly done."

The golden emblems of self-sacrifice, shining above the domes of churches, overshadow the life of Russia, and give the nation the passion for renunciation displayed in its choice of heroes. Seraphim is worshipped by the Christians, and Marya Spiridonova has been taken to the heart of the revolutionists. This girl believed that it was her duty to kill a provincial Governor noted for his severity. She shot him dead at a railway station with a revolver she had concealed in her little muff. To see him a corpse at her feet was the supreme moment of her life. She made no effort to escape, but gave herself up to the Cossacks. A report was published that she had been misused and tortured by the soldiers. A Radical newspaper in St. Petersburg dispatched a representative to distant Tamboff, where she was awaiting trial, to make an inquiry. He wrote a panegyric in honour of the noble and pure victim of a ferocious Government. Letters from her on the joy of renunciation were prominently printed in the papers. "To live is to suffer," she wrote, and her praise of self-sacrifice was as inspiring as the letters of the Spanish nun whose motto was "Aut pati aut mori." It was said that these effusions were forged by needy students who, like the editors, knew what the public wanted. A

life of Spiridonova appeared in a cheap form and proved a commercial success. A Spiridonova society was formed by Russian emigrants in Paris.

"And mind," said the head mistress of the school for the daughters of nobles in St. Petersburg, when she announced that her pupils were to write essays on their favourite heroines, "and mind, no essay on Marya Spiridonova."

The fame of Spiridonova went through the length and breadth of the land. Her journey to exile in Siberia was a triumphal progress. Crowds assembled to greet her at wayside stations and offered her roses. The fact that she was a murderess affected her admirers no more than the fact that Seraphim did nothing of a practically useful character disturbed the minds of the Christians. Both had renounced the joys of life for an ideal: their claim to love and veneration was indisputable.

The Russian is not a better man than his fellows of other lands, but he looks wistfully towards the heights of renunciation which the few are treading with bleeding feet. He may not have the courage to leave the pleasant valley, but he knows that at the top of the mountain the air is purer, the stars shine brighter, and the heavens are nearer.

I was in a church in a country town at the beginning of evening service. At my side I found the rough captain of the little river steamer which had brought me to the place. Near us stood a

man with bare feet and long hair, in a shabby black frock-coat and frayed trousers. He did not appear to notice the people round him, and the expression of his eyes made me think that he saw things which I had not the faculty to see. From time to time he knelt down and prostrated himself on the stones.

"Who is he?" I asked the captain, when we left the church.

"He has given himself to God," he answered, and he pointed out that the bulges in the ascetic's coat were evidently made by chains he wore beneath his clothing.

He gave the information in a matter-of-fact way. It did not strike him as strange that a man should take poverty as his mistress, tame the flesh with cruel penance, and spend his time in communion with God. It was notorious that some people adopted this manner of life, just as others became shoemakers or captains of river steamers. There was a touch of tenderness in the captain's voice as he spoke of it.

A scene in a third-class railway carriage, rattling through the bowels of the earth beneath Wapping, came into my mind. On one side of the carriage were two sisters of charity, on the other, two working women, who looked critically at the religious and smirked at each other.

"Them guys!" said one of the women when

the sisters got out; "what do they want to make themselves so ridic'lous?"

"They aren't women," returned the other contemptuously.

It is not my business to discuss the soundness of the Russian captain's opinions or those of the Englishwomen. My object in putting the two incidents side by side is merely to show the difference of point of view among the common people of the two countries.

The little student who used to teach me Russian had ideas of sanctity which differed *in toto cælo* from those of the captain of the river steamer. One night he came to me with eyes shining, as though he had seen a vision of angels.

"Monsieur," he said, "the Grand Duke Serge is killed."

Two days later he said he had received a letter from Moscow with news of Serge's assassin. He spoke of him with emotion, as of a hero.

"He has given his life," he said—"no man can do more; he knew he had no chance of escape. His mother has been to see him in prison; she does not share his opinions, but he spoke to her so beautifully and remained so calm in face of death that she was very deeply impressed, and we feel that she may become one of us."

Sometimes it is a phrase, unexpectedly relieving the banality or frivolity of conversation, which

reveals the passion for the ideal latent in the soul of the Russian.

I used to visit a middle-class family in St. Petersburg. Every time I went the head of the house used to say, "Kiss me quick," because it was the only English phrase he knew, and he always laughed inordinately when he said it. His stock subject of conversation was the lurid existence he insisted on assuming I led. His stories were never immoral, but usually improper.

"The Great Fast begins soon," he said one day; "I am very glad."

"Why?" I asked.

"One comes nearer to God," he answered.

Anna loves pretty dresses and serious flirtation, and I never thought of her as having a soul until she suddenly revealed its existence. She had told me about the French play she had seen the night before, informed me that she did not care a fiddlestick for her husband, and hinted at what she called an *affaire de cœur*. She maintained that nothing would be right in Russia until the entire Imperial family had been assassinated, but admitted that she had not the courage to dabble in revolution like her sister, whom she had visited that morning in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. While waiting to see the prisoner she had talked, so she told me, with a lady whose son had been there for six months, waiting,

with others, to be tried for conspiring to overthrow the existing order of the State. The lady had influence at Court and hoped to get the boy pardoned by the Emperor.

"But what would the others think of me if I escaped punishment and they had to suffer?" he had asked his mother.

"And she could not understand," said Anna. "I was so sorry for her."

And then I knew that Anna had a soul.

An old man and a young man stood side by side in the dock, charged with being members of the Social Revolutionary Party. The young man pleaded guilty and was sent to Siberia. The old man protested his innocence and successfully moved heaven and earth to escape punishment. The one returned from the court to a prison cell; the other went away to be entertained at a pleasant little supper in a restaurant. The young man is reverenced and the old man pitied.

"We hoped he would refuse to make a defence," remarked a mature, if academic, revolutionist to me.

I did not contest the point. A sympathetic pagan would have been wanting in tact had he suggested to a primitive Christian that a preference for being gored by wild bulls to burning incense before Cæsar's statue robbed the sect of useful evangelists.

The idealism of Russia has been insisted on at some length, because this seems to me to be the chief point of difference between the Russians and the peoples of the West. I have called Russia the land of ideals; I might also have described it in a facile paradox as the monotonous land of variety.

In Cambridge we used to excuse the keenness of the east wind by saying that there was no rising ground between the Cambridgeshire fens and the Ural Mountains. The statement is not far from the truth. Seen from the railway train the country presents the same aspect between Riga, in the Baltic provinces, and St. Petersburg, thence to Moscow in the heart of Russia, or south to Warsaw in the kingdom of Poland. There are low hills near Wilna, on the way from St. Petersburg to Warsaw. I cannot recall any other landmark in those long journeys. In winter the white plain melts, at the horizon, into a leaden sky. The train enters a belt of pines and naked birch trees which, when it chooses, the sun can turn into enchanted woods, sparkling with the crystal treasures of the snow. The cheerless plain succeeds the forest. Sometimes a grey cottage breaks the white monotony, or a snow-laden tree makes a hillock on the level fields. The traveller is soon weary of looking from the window at a scene that is always the same. The passage of the seasons changes the colouring of the

landscape. When the spring comes, the northern spring that comes so swiftly, the fields are emerald; pale tassels hang from the larch trees, the silver birches are decked in fluttering green, and there are purple shadows in the recesses of the pine forests. The white monotony is changed to tender sameness.

Military, rather than commercial, considerations have governed the course of the Russian railways. When Nicholas I. was asked what course he desired the railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow to take, he called for a map, took a pencil and ruler and drew a straight line between the new and the old capitals. His order was obeyed, and the traveller, who leaves the train at one of the most important towns on the Moscow line, finds himself in the midst of fields and obliged to drive a mile before he reaches the city. Thousands of foreigners pass through Pskoff on their way from the German frontier to St. Petersburg, and do not know that the white road from the station leads to one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. The names of stations are written in unintelligible Russian characters, and there is no sign to show the wayfarer that the towns across the plain, beyond the forests, are not as tamely identical as the succession of scenes he looks at from the carriage window. Riga, Wilna, Moscow, are Russian cities, and no three cities could be more

dissimilar. The difference between Ispahan and Nuremberg can hardly be greater than that between Moscow and Riga. Seen in the radiance of a summer's day from the Tower of Ivan the Great, the domes and campaniles of Moscow, flashing with gold and brilliant colour, seem to float above an Eastern city of the imagination. In the centre of Riga are narrow streets with ancient Gothic houses and churches. The newer parts of the city are laid out in boulevards with stucco blocks of flats of modern German design. Soldiers in Russian uniforms, Russian notices in the post office, the head of the Tsar on the coins in one's pocket, alone convince one that Riga is not in Germany. The arms of Lithuania, a white knight on a white charger, are emblazoned on the high gateway of Wilna, and the narrow street descending to the heart of the city passes a Renaissance church of the seventeenth century, dedicated to a Spanish saint of whom Russians have hardly heard. The onion-shaped domes, tastelessly stuck on the roof of an Italian church, filched by the Government from the Jesuits, form the chief evidence that the town is in Russia.

Riga is Lutheran. Wilna is a place of pilgrimage for the Catholics of Eastern Europe. Moscow's pride is to be the third Rome where the faith, defiled in the West, is conserved in the complicated ceremonies of her churches. In Riga the

gentry talk German and the common people Lettish: Russian is a foreign language. Polish, Lithuanian, and Yiddish are more often heard in Wilna than Russian. And beyond the confines of these three cities, in the lands dominated by them, life is as different as the features the country presents are similar.

I have heard people say that Russia is a hundred years behind the times. This is a surprisingly inaccurate generalization. Russia possesses the variety of the ages. Men and women, with the thoughts of the fourth century, the fourteenth, or the eighteenth in their hearts, jostle others who are eager to cure the ills of mankind with the latest political and social nostrums of the twentieth. People of all periods rub shoulders, like the dancers in a masquerade.

If one wants to know what sort of man an Anglo-Saxon villain was, it is more to the point to talk to a Russian peasant than to rummage in libraries. The pilgrims, dressed like Tannhäuser in the third act, with staves in their hands and wallets at their sides, who wander through Russia on their way to pray at the Holy Sepulchre, belong to the age of the Crusades. The ascetic who spends his life in prayer and fasting and wears chains about his body, seems to have found his way into modern Russia from the Egyptian Thebaid of the fourth century. A country lad tells me

A PILGRIM.

that all Russians who are not orthodox are wicked persons, that Poles must be Catholics and Englishmen members of the English Church, and I realise that I am speaking to a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth. I spent a week in Livland with people of the eighteenth century. There were orators who harangued the peasants on the rights of man, and shouted, "Down with the aristocrats!" There was a proud noble who received me in a salon copied from one at Versailles, a menacing hag who demanded whether I was a baron or a dragoon, and there were several great ladies who had fled from burning châteaux to seek the charity of their friends in the towns.

I am getting to the realm of melodrama. Russia is the land of ideals, the land of monotony, the land of variety, and it is also the home of melodrama. And Russia is also the land of melancholy, the land of dancing and laughter, the land of tyranny, and the land of liberty undreamt of by the shackled West. If I have the art to make the reader see Russia as I have seen it, he will find the proof of all these things in the following pages.

## CHAPTER II

### TOWN LIFE

THE greater part of the time I spent in Russia I lived in St. Petersburg, that apotheosis of stucco flung down by the genius of Peter the Great on the marshy islands that form the delta of the Neva. And, in spite of the stucco, St. Petersburg—the Russians call it Petterburg—is a magnificent city, magical in the grip of winter, detestable in autumn, alluring in the spring-time. Its streets are broad, its squares and open places large, the size of its palaces and public buildings makes them imposing, even when their architecture is poor. The quays which border the Neva are the glory of the city: on one hand palaces, on the other the broad river. Across the water, on the opposite bank, rises the graceful tower of the cathedral within the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, home of political prisoners and dead Tsars, and at sunset the tapering pillar of gold, rising high above the tower, becomes a shaft of flame. In winter the river is a rugged sheet of ice, so strong that one may drive on it or cross it in an electric train. Carriages whirl past

ST. PETERSBURG.
(To the right, St. Isaac's Cathedral; to the left, the tower of the Admiralty.)

the palaces at incredible speed and sledges glide over the frozen road with a sound like the flowing of water beneath the keel of a boat. When the spring comes, the Neva runs swiftly beneath an Italian sky in its impetuous course from Lake Ladoga to the sea. The quays become the Ladies' Mile, crowded with carriages and gay with colour. But then, in the month of the white nights, I love the quays best an hour after midnight, when the sky is opal and one knows not whether the crimson glow across the river is the end of sunset or the beginning of the dawn.

In winter, when everybody is wrapped to the eyes in the skins of wild animals or of the domestic sheep, the streets have a sombre appearance, but when the warm weather comes there is riot of variety in costume and colour. Officers, Government employés, students, and schoolboys, all in uniform, mingle with pedestrians in ordinary dress. There are ladies in smart frocks and working women with lace scarves on their heads, workmen in blouses of scarlet, sky-blue, black, or orange, with trousers thrust into top boots. Priests can wear cassocks of any colour they choose and one may meet one dressed in apple-leaf green, violet, or fawn colour. Nurses in national costume of vivid hues with strings of pearls round their necks and a silk coif and ribbons, Cossacks in long tunics of orange, scarlet, or green, with high caps

of astrakhan set at a jaunty angle, make splashes of brilliant colour in the crowd. The traffic in the broad Nevsky never lost the charm of strangeness for me. The Petersburg cab is like the Paris *fiacre*, but the driver is wrapped in a long robe, usually dark blue, and wears a narrow girdle of gaudy cretonne. The fashionable coachman wears a similar robe, padded out to such an extent that it is impossible to tell whether the man inside is fat or thin. The custom is said to have been introduced by Catharine the Great, and the story goes that she said that there was to be twelve inches of good stuff between her coachman's body and her nose. However that may be, the fact remains that the fatter your coachman the smarter your turn out. These extraordinary creatures drive like Roman charioteers, bending forward with their arms outstretched and a rein in either hand. The roads are so wide that they are able to let their black horses, with long tails and manes, go at a gallop. In winter, when harnessed to a sledge, a great net of royal blue or bottle green is stretched over the horses' backs and attached to the front of the sledge in order to prevent the frozen snow thrown up by the animals' hoofs from hitting the occupants in the face. Occasionally the passing of a Court carriage with servants in scarlet adds to the gaiety of the street, or the Dowager Empress may whirl past with an old Cossack standing at the

back of her carriage. A file of wild-looking Cossacks in khaki, mounted on hardy little ponies, passes, or a funeral procession with long-haired priests in black and silver vestments, and lacqueys carrying lanterns, threads its way along the street. The duty on motor-cars is so high that only the very rich possess them, and taxicabs are few in number. Electric cars do not add to the charm of the streets, but as they have been solemnly blessed with holy water by the clergy it would be improper to object to them.

Like most of the inhabitants of St. Petersburg and, for that matter, of any other Russian city, I lived in a flat, one of a hundred in a barracks built round two enormous courtyards. Wealthier persons lived in the flats looking on to the street; my windows gave on a courtyard, which, with the addition of a fountain and a couple of magnolia trees, might have passed as the patio of a Spanish house. Only once did I descend the black way, the back staircase used by servants and tradesmen, to the courtyard; for the flat was a superior one and had a *paradny*, or state staircase, leading to the street. I am bound to confess that the state staircase was an ordinary flight of stone steps, and was not covered with crimson pile, like the staircases leading to the flats on the Palace Quay, but it was at least regularly scrubbed, whereas a black way, the playground of cats, never is.

The entrance hall at the bottom of the *paradny* was the domain of the porter, called a Schveitzar, the Russian for a Swiss. His name was Miron, and he lived, with his wife and family, in a couple of cellars beneath the hall floor. Like many of his fellows, he was a retired soldier, and he never answered yes or no, but said, "Exactly so," or, "It is not so," in military fashion. It was his business to know whether the occupants of the flats on his staircase were at home or not, in order to save visitors the trouble of climbing the stairs to no purpose. In summer he wore a grey suit; in winter he appeared in a long overcoat trimmed with silver braid and buttons. He was liable to be fined by the police if he did not lock the door at midnight in winter and at eleven in summer, and he had to get out of bed to let people in or out after those hours. Miron had the merit of being exceedingly dull. A capable Schveitzar carefully notes the visitors one receives, gossips to one's servants, and hands on any information he picks up to the *starshy dvornik*, or head yardman, who retails it at the local police station. Persons whose lives will not bear close inspection prefer to take a flat "without Schveitzar," as the advertisements say.

The head yardman is an important personage. He combines the duties of a servant, an official, and a detective. He is *ex officio* a member of the secret police, and the landlord cannot dismiss him

without the permission of the police authorities. As the landlord's servant, the *starshy dvornik* must see that the yard of the house is kept clean and in order, and that nobody steals the logs of wood stacked in the middle. Fuel is usually provided by the landlord and included in the rent of a flat, and it is the duty of the *starshy dvornik* to see that a proper supply of logs are taken to the tenants by the under yardmen every morning. His official duties are onerous. He must see that nobody stays in the house under his care who has not the permission of the police to remain in the city. A guest comes to stay with one of the tenants and it is the business of the *starshy dvornik* to obtain his passport and take it to the police station, where, if approved, it is backed with a stamp and the necessary authorization to remain. Somebody has a new housemaid, and her arrival must be reported, and her passport submitted to the police. If I were going away for a few days, the Schveitzar would tell the *dvornik*, who, in his turn, would communicate the interesting information to the police, and they would "write me out." In the place I went to another *dvornik* would have me "written in." When I went abroad my passport was taken to the police station to be backed with a declaration that there was no objection to my leaving Russia. On these occasions the *dvornik* honoured me with

a visit to return the passport, and to receive a *na tchai*, or tip, which he possibly spent on vodka, although the Russian term indicates its purpose with precision and, translated literally, means: for tea. The head yardmen and their assistants must be prepared to assist the police in the discharge of their duties. I have known them receive an order to attend a patriotic meeting, and I once saw a crowd of them acting as claque at a great meeting of the Union of the Russian People, a reactionary society, at which enthusiasm was roused by playing the national anthem every ten minutes, and which began with political orations and ended as an elaborate religious ceremony.

Together with these duties the *starshy dvornik* must be capable of doing the delicate work of a spy. He finds out all he can about the lives of the tenants. From the Schveitzars of the house he learns who are the visitors they receive and what hours they keep. The under *dvorniks* gossip with cooks and maids when they bring up the wood. Footmen may condescend to play a little game of cards and drink a glass of vodka with the guardians of the court. From the chatter of the domestics the *starshy dvornik* gets the information he requires for the police. He visits the police station every morning and retails any interesting facts he has learnt from his assistants

and the servants. It is said that the police keep careful notes of the information they receive, and, for aught I know, there may be a *dossier* on a dusty shelf of a police station in which my peccadilloes are recorded.

From time to time one is made abruptly aware that one is being watched.

"The *starshy dvornik* has been asking who is the young gentleman who visits you, and why he comes," said a landlady to me one day.

I explained that he gave me Russian lessons, and heard no more of the matter. The young man was a Jew, therefore possibly a revolutionist, and we might be concocting a plot to blow up the Winter Palace.

The military attaché of the British Embassy and his wife called on an English friend of mine, and the next morning their Schveitzar, a friendly soul, told them, under a pledge of secrecy, that the *dvornik* had been asking who the visitors were. For the next three days an obvious detective pottered about on the pavement outside the house to see if any more suspicious visitors arrived.

These little incidents are more amusing than annoying. It is no laughing matter if the police enter one's home in the middle of the night and proceed to search it. The tattle of servants, listened to by under yardmen, and passed on

to their chief, may be monstrously distorted by the time it comes to the ears of the police. When suspicion is once aroused, every visitor becomes a revolutionist and every bridge-party a meeting of conspirators. To find the horrid evidence of guilt the house must be searched. Several friends of mine, two of them correspondents of English papers, have had their houses invaded by gendarmes, their drawers and cupboards ransacked, their stoves searched and their letters and papers taken away. An acquaintance of mine, a member of the first Duma, was entertaining an informal party of friends one night, when the police arrived with a warrant to search his flat. A young poet was reciting his own decadent verses as a gendarme officer and his men strode into the room. The guests saw no reason for ending a pleasant evening, and the poet resumed the recitation of his verses when the host and his wife had retired to superintend the ransacking of the bedrooms. Supper was laid in the dining-room, and the party sat down under the eye of the officer, who wistfully explained that he hated his job, and that searching houses at three o'clock in the morning was extremely fatiguing. I think it regrettable that the merry-makers refused to take the hint and offer him a sandwich and glass of vodka. The gendarmes were still in possession when the guests left, and they remained until six

o'clock in the morning, when they went away, laden with letters, including all the pretty notes the victim and his wife had written to each other before their marriage. They did not interest the police, and a year later were returned.

Nobody ever loved a flat. Nobody ever thought sentimentally of the dear old flat where his childhood was spent. Russians reserve their affection for their country houses. The flat in which I lived the longest consisted of a straight passage with a blank wall on one side and a wall with seven doors on the other. The rooms communicated with each other by folding doors, and one overheard the conversation of people in an adjacent room if they were not careful to lower their voices. Russians are exceedingly hospitable, and the plan of having a number of rooms opening into each other is convenient for people who are fond of entertaining. I once went to a card-party and walked through a series of six rooms, brilliantly lit up and filled with old French furniture, before I reached the drawing-room in which the hostess was receiving. There were obviously no other rooms in the house and I asked myself where upon earth the occupants slept. A friend solved the problem for me by explaining that when we had gone the servants would bring pillows and sheets and the family would sleep on the divans which I had noticed in several of the rooms. The sacrifice

to hospitality and display seemed too great. In the flats of the wealthy there is often an enormous room, which can be used as a ballroom, with doors on either side leading to a cosy drawing-room and to a dining-room. The big room has little furniture: chairs, covered perhaps with gold brocade, ranged round the walls, a couple of elaborate tables in corners and a grand piano.

Rooms are rarely carpeted. The boards are painted a reddish brown, and in all the better houses the floors are laid with parquet. Men, called *pollitury*, come at regular intervals to polish the floor, and they rub in the polish by skating about the rooms with a pad on one foot. The windows are double. On the day when they are sealed up with putty and the sill between the two panes is covered with moss or wadding, decorated with shreds of coloured wool, one knows that winter has set in. Then only a pane about a foot square can be opened for ventilating the room, and on a cold day one is glad to shut it after it has been opened ten minutes. The houses are heated by stoves, built on the principle of the old-fashioned ovens sometimes to be found in English farmhouses, in which a wood fire is lit, the embers raked out, and loaves put in to be baked by the hot air. In the morning half a dozen logs are burnt in the stove, and, when the embers are dead, the door is shut and the chimney closed by a shutter. The hot air, im-

A PERFECT COOK.

prisoned in the tall structure of tiles or iron, suffices to keep the room warm all day, and when the weather is not severe the stove in a small room need not be heated more than once in two days. This method of warming houses is more effective than the English method. One is never cold in Russia, and I have heard Russians say that they cannot support the discomfort of a winter in England. They do not wear warmer indoor clothes in winter than in summer, and extra bedding is unnecessary.

Before the emancipation of 1865 people used to bring the serfs they had had trained as servants with them when they came from the country to spend the winter in St. Petersburg. Servants were more numerous in great houses than now, when they have to be paid as well as fed. The Russian servant is, however, content to work for very small wages. An inexperienced girl from the country is glad to accept sixteen shillings a month. Eighteen pounds a year is an extravagant wage for a cook. I used to be looked after by an old woman who cooked perfectly and received rather high wages, to be precise, twenty-four shillings a month. She was exceedingly pious, fasted rigorously in Lent, held it to be a sin to eat apples until the Feast of the Transfiguration, and could neither read nor write. Every day I gave her a small sum for marketing. When she returned with

her purchases she used to come to me and account for her expenditure. Black bread, three kopecks; white bread, seven kopecks; meat, thirty-five kopecks; and so on, to the end of the list. I never knew her make a mistake. She refused to occupy the bedroom I offered her, and preferred to sleep in the kitchen, where she had a bed with a pyramid of pillows. There were, I think, eight of them, graduated in size from the big one at the bottom of the pile to a pillow the size of a pin-cushion at the top. I often wondered how she disposed of them when she went to bed.

One morning a strange servant brought in the samovar and breakfast rolls.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am the sister of Marya," she answered.

"And where is Marya?"

"Marya can never serve the Barin again, but I will serve the Barin."

"But what is the matter with her?"

"She is very ill; I cannot explain to the Barin."

In the kitchen I found Marya huddled in a chair and gently moaning. She firmly refused to see a doctor. She would remain in the house and her sister would serve the Barin. Three days later they quarrelled and the sister disappeared. Then Marya herself disappeared.

She returned the following afternoon, bringing with her a young woman, against whom I con-

ceived a violent dislike at first sight, and she announced that henceforth the stranger would serve me. I objected, sent the girl, who appeared to be drunk, about her business, left Marya weeping in the kitchen, and went to implore the help of a woman friend. I brought her back with me, led her to the kitchen, and retired, like a coward, to my study.

"Marya has been drinking," said my friend in a business-like way, when she returned after a stormy interview; "it has brought on an old complaint and she must go to the hospital at once."

When she had gone, Marya crawled into the room, seized my hands and kissed them, begging for forgiveness.

Of course it was given and she also had a little lecture.

"When you are stronger you had better go and see your monk at the Kievsky Sobor," I said.

Marya held the monks of the Kievsky Cathedral in high esteem. The monks of the Alexander Nevsky Monastery she refused to have dealings with, because she suspected them of eating meat, playing cards, and other infirmities.

"No," she said, "I shall not go to the Kievsky Sobor; I shall go to Father John of Kronstadt, he knows one's sins before one confesses them."

The poor old soul went to the hospital the next day, holding a pink rose I gave her when we parted.

Perhaps it is because the Russian Government is meddlesome that the ordinary Russian shows a marked inclination to let other people do as they like. A Russian household is managed on this principle, and the comedy of the kitchen is often exceedingly amusing.

The two leading ladies in the particular comedy I am going to describe were Stepanida, an old cook, the facsimile of my poor Marya, and Tatiana, a housemaid. Stepanida believed in the divine right of kings, and boxed the ears of the butcher's boy one day when he spoke impertinently of the Tsar and advanced republican opinions.

"God has given us the Tsar and He will take care of him," she said.

Tatiana, on the other hand, was all for liberty and the limitation of the power of the Crown. The echoes of heated political debate used to float to me from the kitchen, especially on those days when the washerwoman took tea there and added the weight of her influence to the arguments of the cook.

Tatiana was a widow, and was allowed to have her little boy, a pleasing child of five, to live with her. He was kept in the kitchen by day and in the servants' bedroom by night. Piotr, a strapping lad of nineteen, also resided in the kitchen and slept on a mattress thrown down in a corner. I believed him to be the small boy's brother. After

some months I discovered that nobody knew who he was.

"He came," said the mistress of the house vaguely; "the servants like him, he has nowhere to go, so he remains."

"At your expense," I remarked.

"What difference does one extra make?" she asked.

When one of Stepanida's cronies, an elderly cook without a place, came to stay indefinitely, Piotr slept on a board, put on the top of the bath, and the visitor slept in the kitchen. She would have possibly become a permanent resident had she not given way to distressing habits of intemperance. The presence of a large and intoxicated cook in the kitchen incommoded the household. Tatiana, the invaluable Tatiana with the gift of St. Anthony of Padua for finding anything anybody lost, became fratchy. The liberty of the kitchen was destroying the peace of the boudoir and the visitor was bundled out.

Russian servants possess the faculty of being able to serve a glass of tea at a moment's notice day and night. There is always a little teapot on the top of the kitchen stove, which looks like a long table with a drawer at one end for the fire, and the fine Chinese tea used in Russia never seems to get bitter from protracted brewing. But a drink composed of an inch of stewed tea in a

tumbler full of over-boiled water is only a makeshift. Fresh tea is made from water boiled in a samovar, an urn heated with charcoal from the kitchen fire. In an ordinary Russian household the samovar appears morning, afternoon, and evening. It is put on the dining-room table at breakfast-time, the tea made in a very small pot, which is stuck on the top of the samovar, and the pleasant sound of bubbling water welcomes the various members of the family as they come in. One can lie in bed without dismally reflecting that sloth will be punished by tepid tea, conscious that the samovar will continue to bubble for at least an hour. Were I a poet I would write a sonnet to a samovar. Its unfailing cheerfulness makes it a companion and a friend. They used to set one on the table in my room every evening at eleven, whether I was in or out. It was pleasant to know, as one drew near home, that the *samovartchik*, the dear little samovar, was industriously humming in the lonely room, and that tea was brewing in the little pot sitting on the top. A book, cigarettes, and two or three tumblers of golden tea ended the day and made one forget its annoyances.

In most Russian households the samovar appears again in the afternoon, and it is an almost universal practice to have tea in the evening. Fashionable people, who insist on following foreign customs, have elegant silver kettles with spirit-lamps

brought to the drawing-room for evening tea, but the middle-class family sits round the dining-room table, and the mistress of the household presides over an enormous samovar. There is a basket of rolls and cracknels, perhaps a dish of slices of sausage and ham, a pot of jam, served in tiny glass dishes and eaten as a sweet, cigarettes, and conversation. Two or three friends may come in and the evening passes at the table in drinking glass after glass of tea and talking. If one knows people at all well, it is best to call in the evening, for many dine at five, and an afternoon call may entail the eating of a solid and unwelcome meal. In exalted circles dinner is served at seven or half-past, and possibly Grand Dukes dine at eight; but I was once forced by Her Excellency the wife of a provincial governor to stay to dinner at half-past five. There cannot be said to be any regular dinner hour in Russia. The meal may be served at any time between one and seven, and depends on work and inclination.

An invitation to an evening party, even though it be a brilliant rout, in the phrase of the society reporters of the Russian newspapers, is usually couched in the form of a request to come to tea. A cabinet minister and his wife, whom we will call Petroff, will send one a gilt-edged card with the following friendly note printed on it :—

"Ivan Alexandrovitch and Anna Pavlovna

Petroff most humbly ask you to take a cup of tea with them on Thursday at ten," and the terms of the invitation do not denote an occasion for heart-to-heart conversation, but an opportunity of displaying uniforms and orders—if one has them—and being crushed in a struggle for sweet champagne.

The Petroffs, it will be noted, appear to have rather formidable Christian names. As a matter of fact Mr. Petroff's Christian name is Ivan and his wife's Anna. Russians have one Christian name apiece and one only. Alexandrovitch is a patronymic and means son of Alexander. Pavlovna means daughter of Pavl, or Paul. In conversation and in letters people are always addressed by their Christian names and patronymics, not by their surnames. Were I calling on the excellent Petroff and did not know his Christian name and patronymic I should say to his servant: "How do they call your lord?" and should then be able to greet him in proper form: "Hail, Ivan, son of Alexander." His wife I should call Anna, daughter of Paul, because it would not be quite polite to call her Mrs. Petroff; she might even feel a little hurt to think that I had not taken the trouble to find out the Christian names of herself and her father. Their son, Dmitri, I should call Dmitri Ivanovitch. The daughter, Olga, would be Olga Ivanovna. Servants are expected to address one in this manner, and it is not considered respectful

for them to employ the surnames of their superiors when they speak to them. I have heard a Russian working man refer to the English Queen Mother as Alexandra Feodorovna. Her sister, the Dowager Empress, was known to him as Marya Feodorovna, and it was therefore natural for him to speak of the English Queen as Alexandra daughter of Frederick.

The Russian system of address is a tax on the memory, but it has its advantages. I once called on a friend who was staying with a man whom I did not know. A pretty and very charming girl gave us tea. She was introduced as Olga Ivanovna, but whether she was the host's wife, or sister, or adopted cousin I could not divine.

"Who was the pretty girl who gave us tea?" I asked my friend the next time we met.

"That," he said, "was Olga Ivanovna; she lives there."

The position of the lady could not have been indicated with such delicacy in any other language.

An Englishman feels a little embarrassed at first when he finds he is expected to address every woman he meets by her Christian name, and still more when he finds he must kiss her hand, if she be married or no longer young. The hands of young, unmarried women are on no account to be kissed.

Old-fashioned ladies kiss one on the forehead as one bends over their hands. Careful com-

bination is required to perform this feat gracefully and without disaster. Do not kiss bishops' hands ; they have a disagreeable habit of retaliating by kissing one three times on the mouth. It is safer to make a very low bow with one hand stretched out in an attempt to touch the floor. This is the old Russian form of salutation, learnt, perhaps, at the Court of Byzantine emperors. Men usually shake hands, but when they are on intimate terms they sometimes kiss. In Russia to refuse to embrace is as offensive as to refuse to shake hands in England. Tactful Russians make allowance for the eccentricity of Englishmen in the matter. The horror of an Englishman, affectionately seized in a restaurant by an elderly Russian with a long beard and kissed three times on the mouth before he had time to defend himself, afforded me considerable amusement.

An American was leaving Russia for good with his wife and family. Among the friends who came to the station to say farewell to them was a young Russian. A few moments before the train went he seized the American's hands and tried to kiss him.

"I am sorry, but I cannot kiss you," said the American.

"But you are going away," said the Russian.

"I am sorry, but I cannot kiss you."

"But we may never see each other again," pleaded the other.

"I am sorry, but I could not kiss a man," replied the American with finality, and I saw the tears well into the Russian's eyes.

Of the Easter kiss there will be something to say later; for the present let us end this digression and return to tea. Good tea costs five shillings a pound and a single spoonful is enough to make a brew for two or three persons. It is usually served in tumblers, but in private houses women are given cups. Luxurious people may put a tiny slice of lemon in their tea. Sugar is usually added, but there is a special Russian word to denote the act of drinking tea while one is sucking a lump of sugar, and there is a legend that, in very poor families, a piece of sugar is suspended from the ceiling by a string for common use in this manner. If one orders a pot of tea in a *tchainik*, or tea-house—*tchai* is the Russian for tea—the waiter brings an enormous white china pot of hot water with a tiny teapot sitting on it in place of a lid. The common people pour a quarter of an inch of tea into a glass and fill it up with water. They sit contentedly by the hour drinking glass after glass of the pallid beverage. On a journey the third-class passenger usually takes with him a paper of tea, sugar, a mug, and a kettle. Boiling water can be obtained at station refreshment-rooms, and sometimes there is a gigantic samovar on the platform.

Tea-drinking is held to be a sin by one of the

straitest sects of Old Believers or Nonconformists. At a recent conference of the sect the practice was denounced with other errors which have come to Russia from the unorthodox West, such as coffee-drinking and shaving. These Puritans are few in number and most Russians are inclined to imitate Western fashions. The gilded youths of St. Petersburg ask one if one goes to the "five o'clock" at the Hôtel d'Europe, although they do not always understand the exact meaning of the obsolete English term, which probably came to Russia from France. A friend of mine once received a note from a Russian woman which ran: "I shall be so pleased if you will come to five o'clock at half-past four on Wednesday and have a cup of chocolate."

The British workman cannot live without his beer, and the Russian cannot live without tea. In the post office the young woman who sells one stamps has probably a glass of tea at her side. In Government offices, banks, newspaper offices, tea is perpetually going. At railway stations boys come into the train with glasses of tea. At night cabmen and *dvorniks* buy tea from the men who come round with great samovars swathed in cloths and tumblers stuck into little pockets on their belts. *Na tchai*, for tea, is the Russian for backsheesh. Always, everywhere, golden tea.

A ST. PETERSBURG CABMAN.

# CHAPTER III

## FOOD AND FASHION

THERE were a number of dishes of cold meats on the table. I was lunching with Russians for the first time and thought it rather friendly of them to give me an informal meal. They ate sparingly, but, being hungry, I did not stint myself. When I had thoroughly satisfied my appetite, and was hoping that friendliness was not going so far as to deprive me of coffee, a servant entered with a tureen of soup and I found that the serious business of the meal was only about to begin. Live and learn, I said to myself, and did so to such purpose that when I returned to England I yearned for the *zakouska*—the word means snack—the leisurely prelude to a Russian meal.

If you happen to be a person to whom the size of butchers' bills is a matter of moment, introduce the custom at once. Do not give your ravenous children lobster salad and caviare before the leg of mutton and trimmings, but copy the ordinary Russian housewife. When they come trooping home from school for midday dinner give them, for

example, a great bowl of salad, made of haricot beans, potatoes, and onion, to take off the edge of their appetites. Then let them have soup, with plenty of little pies, made of the most substantial kind of pastry and stuffed with mincemeat, cabbage, egg, or fish. When the leg of mutton appears they will not want more than a mouthful. If, however, you are rich and are frank enough to acknowledge that eating is an agreeable occupation, the *zakouska* shall be for you a beautiful kingdom of sensuous pleasure, as you will understand from further study of the matter.

At a dinner-party in a large house the *zakouska* is not served in the dining-room. The guests go to a smaller room, where they find a table covered with alluring dishes, delicate slices of cooked and of raw ham, salads of every kind, caviare, smoked fish, *pâté de foie gras*, perhaps an earthen pot of hot mushrooms and rice, and I have even seen a great dish of bacon and mushrooms served. The *zakouska* is eaten standing. People move about, plate in hand, to greet their friends. The servants do not trouble the guests, but the men dab down little helpings on the women's plates. To wash down the meats there is vodka, the national drink, a colourless and tasteless spirit, brandy, kümmel, and a rose-coloured spirit, preferred by women because it contains little alcohol. After half an hour in the *zakouska*-room every-

body has unbent, little glasses of neat spirit have given the guests a flip, and when they go to the dining-room they are already warmed to brilliancy.

There is an old story of a Russian ambassador who had heard that foreigners believe Russians eat candles, and, accordingly, had a course of tallow candles served at a dinner-party. His own candle was made of almond paste, and he ate it, wick and all, while his guests were politely trying to nibble the genuine article. In point of fact, the cooking in a good Russian house is French, perfected by the influence of the higher culinary thought of the country. A variety of wines is served at a dinner-party and sweet champagne comes with the ice. When the hostess rises it is the custom for the guests to thank her for her hospitality; she gives her hand to the men to kiss, and often embraces the women. Men and women go to the drawing-room together, and later in the evening tea is served.

Russians are given to hospitality. When a man says: "We dine at seven, come whenever you like," he is not paying an empty compliment, but expects to be taken at his word. I know an old general and his wife who give all their friends a standing invitation to lunch with them any day they like. Eight places are always laid at the luncheon-table, and, by favour of Heaven, the

right number of guests and no more always seems to come. The first time I lunched at this house the hostess told me she hoped I would come two or three times a week. I had only seen her once before, when I had paid a formal call to present a letter of introduction, and her cordiality seemed to me rather breathless. I waited discreetly before returning, and received a great scolding for my negligence.

Well-bred Russians are as adept in maintaining the fiction that nobody is interested in food as well-bred people in other civilised countries. An old-fashioned Russian merchant makes no effort to disguise the fact that he considers gluttony, like other vices, agreeable. "When you are eating rich and greasy foods," says an early Russian writer, "think of those who have nothing, and praise the Lord." Rich food in large quantities is still the ideal of the uncultured Russian. He constrains his guests to eat more than they want, and refuses to believe them when they protest that they cannot swallow another morsel. The embarrassing generosity of Russian hospitality is one of the excuses put forward by some of the English people living in St. Petersburg for knowing little of Russian life. The upper classes do not, as a rule, want to know them, because they are engaged in trade, and their constitutions cannot stand the

strain of being entertained by the business community.

The fashionable world of St. Petersburg is comparatively small. The stranger who wants to see it should go to the ballet at the Marinsky Theatre on a Sunday night. Every opera-house is impregnated with the spirit of the city in which it is found. Foreigners leave Covent Garden on a big night, staggered by the richness, the luxury, and the elegance of the scene. In Berlin the people at the opera are so badly dressed that one is half surprised that they do not rise and depart in a body to show their disapproval of Salome or the Rosen Kavalier. Women dressed like the people in Ibsen's plays wander into the sumptuous foyer of the opera-house in Stockholm and look unhappy in a room that is shrieking for diamonds and the frivolities of the mode. There is repose in the Fenice Theatre, where the delicate loveliness of the Venetian ladies is framed in the faded gold of the boxes, like the portraits of bygone beauties. And the Marinsky Theatre has a character of its own. The scene in the house is less splendid than at Covent Garden, but more animated. The jewels are less magnificent, but the uniforms of officers, Court pages, and boys from the privileged schools make a blaze of colour in stalls and boxes. The *entr'actes* are long, and many people spend the time walking up and down the

corridor behind the stalls and chatting to their friends. The foyer upstairs is left to those who know no better than to walk round it in a great circle. People from any part of the house can go there, and it is amusing to stand and watch them, but it would ruin a fashionable reputation to be seen promenading with them. The middle-class Russian has sketchy ideas of the proper way to dress, and I have seen some unbelievable disguises in the foyer of the opera. The most extravagant was a black frock-coat, a white evening waistcoat, a scarlet necktie in a sailor's knot, and light trousers. A cherry-coloured bow with an up-and-down collar, in conjunction with a dinner-jacket and brown boots, was another pleasing get up. It is a great responsibility for an Englishman in St. Petersburg to dress himself. Young Russians are apt to regard him as a living substitute for the fashion plates their tailors receive from London.

I once met a young man at a concert who greeted me with the words : " Voilà le chic anglais."

Being far too indolent a person to dress well, I asked him what he meant. He called my attention to the fact that my shirt was bulging from my waistcoat.

" Fits very badly," I said.

" Pas de tout," he said, " we know that all Englishmen wear their shirts like that, à montrer qu'ils ne portent pas un plastron."

A BOY OF THE BALLET.

It was a nightmare that he conjured up. The anxiety of dining out in a dickey and, I suppose, artificial cuffs!

The people who parade in the foyer either do not know the way to the corridor behind the stalls or else they have sufficient tact to keep away; it remains, therefore, a pleasant gathering-place for the society of the town.

"When are you going to prison?" I asked a man I met there one night. He was a prominent member of the first Imperial Duma and had been condemned to three months' imprisonment that afternoon for signing the famous Viborg Manifesto, which called on the nation to refuse to pay taxes and to serve in the army.

"I think in about three months' time," he answered lightly, and praised the new scenery and dresses the Government had bought for *Carmen*.

"And this," I said to an elegant Socialist showing himself in the gay crowd, "and this is how the last kopeck of the peasants is spent."

The tag from a Socialist speech or newspaper article—I have forgotten where I culled it—was shot at him without effect.

"Horrible," he said, laughing; "mais il faut en profiter."

I spoke of the brilliant boy who had been flitting across the stage to mad music, his lips parted in a happy smile.

"But you should have seen his brother," said the Socialist; "he danced better and had more temperament, but he got mixed up in a revolutionary plot and committed suicide."

Now that the revolution is crushed, its leaders hanged, or sitting in prison, or eating their hearts out in Siberia, conversation takes a startling turn less often than was the case in the time of disorder. During that period of stress one heard strange things said in unexpected places.

"What a chance for a revolutionist to blow up the whole lot of them!" said a friend to me at a party at the Foreign Office, as M. Stolypin, the Prime Minister, moved up the room, smiling and greeting friends.

The man spoke lightly and yet I think we were both of us conscious of the possibility of catastrophe. A policeman had stopped my sledge a few yards from the door and asked to see my card of invitation, which I had not brought with me. He accepted my word that I was the person I represented myself to be without hesitation. The footmen in the hall could not possibly have recognised half the guests. Revolutionists had been at the pains to blow up M. Stolypin's villa on the Apothecary's Island. They might have chosen a party at the Foreign Office as the occasion of a second attempt on his life. The Court remained in retirement at Peterhof or Tsarskoe Selo, and the

MDLLE. PRIOBRAJHENSKAYA OF THE BALLET IN NATIONAL DRESS.

society of the capital would have collapsed had people thought too much of the risk they ran in going to entertainments at which they were likely to meet men sentenced to death by revolutionary committees.

Sometimes the incongruity of scene and conversation was almost ludicrous. Here is an instance. The scene was a great room, fragrant with roses and hung with deep blue brocade powdered with a coat of arms. There were two guests besides myself, a young man and an elderly woman, rich, of great family, and noted for the enthusiasm with which she advocated the principles of Liberalism. Two footmen brought in the tea equipage reverently. We talked about the meeting between the Emperor and King Edward, which was to take place at Revel two days later. I remember the hostess mentioned that her father was one of the Russian suite to be attached to the person of Queen Alexandra.

" My dear," said the elderly woman in a lull of the conversation, " did I tell you about taking my husband to prison last week ? It was so funny. I insisted on his having plenty of things and they were packed in three portmanteaux. We drove down to the Kresty Prison, where the poor dear is, and I ordered the yardman at the gate to get somebody to take in the luggage. ' Do you suppose this is the Hôtel de France, madam ? ' he asked.

Both I and my husband laughed, we couldn't help it."

The host asked what news there was of the prisoner.

"I went to a house overlooking the prison yard yesterday," said the lady, "at the time he takes exercise. He was walking round in a ring with the other members of the first Duma imprisoned there. Poor old M. Petrunkievitch was hobbling along, hardly able to keep up with the rest."

At the time it seemed strange to hear great ladies carrying on a conversation of this kind.

And sometimes there was tragedy in the conversation. I am not likely to forget the passion in the voice of young Count Apraxin, who was, at the time, standing as Conservative candidate for a St. Petersburg constituency at the Duma elections, when he told me the tragedy of the family in whose house we met at a pleasant luncheon-party. We were sitting rather apart from the others after luncheon, talking about revolutionists. I said that I could not help feeling a certain admiration for them, because they gave their lives for their cause.

"Do not we do the same?" he said. "Do you not know, do you not know that the son of our host was shot dead by revolutionists because of his loyalty to the Government and his devotion to the Emperor?"

The host was an old man, very gentle and quite blind. He used to touch an icon of St. Seraphim on the walls of his study when he wanted help to find something he was groping for. His wife was always dressed in black, and her colourless hair fell in a long curl on her shoulders. I remembered, when the young Count spoke, that, although she laughed, she never smiled.

The society of St. Petersburg consists almost exclusively of the families of men who are in the service of the State. It is an official and military society. Rank or the possession of a title gives no right to go to Court, as an American girl who married a Russian prince had to learn. A new representative of the United States had been accredited to the Russian Court and was to give an official reception, as is the custom when a new ambassador comes into office. The Ministry of the Court make the arrangements and issue the invitations. The host has nothing to say in the matter; he is to be introduced to the society of the capital in his own house. No invitation was received by the Russo-American princess, and she was not slow to inquire the reason. The Ambassador learnt from the Ministry of the Court that, as the lady's husband did not possess the necessary qualifications to be presented at Court, the couple were debarred from receiving an invitation to the reception.

"What! I, a princess, and I cannot go to Court!" the bewildered American is reported to have exclaimed.

The Ambassador interceded with the Minister. But Baron Fredericks was not to be moved; the Prince had thrown up a commission in the army before he had served long enough to entitle him to go to Court, and the rule which closed the doors of the Winter Palace to him could not be relaxed because he had happened to marry a member of one of the most distinguished families in the United States. If the Ambassador desired he could invite the lady privately, but no official invitation would under any circumstances be sent her.

The great world of the capital is best seen at one of these ceremonies. The staircase of the embassy is decorated with brilliant lacqueys, and, at the door of the reception-room, is a servant in a black suit and lace jabot, who is provided by the Ministry of the Court and appears to have been carefully trained to roll Persian and Japanese titles off his tongue with the same ease as German or Italian. He intones the guests' names and they pass into the presence of their Excellencies. The Ambassador, in all the finery of gold lace, orders, and ribbons, has at his side a gorgeous official of the Court, and the Ambassadress, who must stand for three hours with her lips fixed in a happy smile and her arm extended like a handle, is attended by an

equally beautiful creature. The duty of these two is to present the guests to their host and hostess. People who are not celebrities whisper their names to the first official, who gracefully indicates to the Ambassador that he is to shake hands. After kissing the finger-tips of the Ambassadress and the other ladies of the embassy, one leaves them to their fate and passes to the other rooms, packed with a highly coloured crowd. The uniforms of the men are even more splendid than the dresses of the women. There are diplomats in dark green, or black, or navy blue, embroidered with gold, officers in a hundred gay uniforms, cabinet ministers and courtiers in long, buttoned coats, covered back and front with enough gold to decorate the chasuble of an archbishop. The most sumptuous figure at these entertainments used to be the Austrian Ambassador, Count Bercthold, now Minister of Foreign Affairs. He used to appear in the dress of a Hungarian magnate, a sixteenth-century costume of sombre velvet, trimmed with astrakhan and ornamented with a golden collar of cunning workmanship. He was once outdone. Père Lagrange, a Dominican friar, had been asked to the French Ambassador's reception, and the contrast between the elaboration of uniforms and the simplicity of the old man's white robe made him the most conspicuous figure in the crowd. There is no music at these entertainments; people are sufficiently

amused by looking at each other and in greeting the friends they are jostled against in the struggle to the buffets, where sandwiches, ices, and sweet champagne are served.

Diplomatists play an important part in St. Petersburg society. Ambassadors and heads of missions make their presence known and add to the pageant of the streets by driving about in carriages with dashing *chasseurs*, wearing enormous plumes, on the boxes of their carriages. They also enjoy and exercise the privilege of having the backs of their fat coachmen marked with a series of scallops in braid.

The younger attachés, who are told nothing, may be seen sitting in the offices of embassies during the morning, employed as typists. In the evening they are to be met at balls and, as occasion offers, they are used as supers at those functions designed to conserve the amity of nations. A king is crowned, or dies, or reigns for fifty years, and the corps gets into professional clothes to attend a ceremony in a church of the appropriate rite. In Russia these ceremonies are sometimes very exhausting. When the Church of the Saviour, built on the spot where Alexander II. fell at the hands of assassins, was consecrated, the Emperor and Empress remained standing throughout the service, which lasted four hours, and aged ambassadors, unaccustomed to the

rigour of Orthodox worship, limped to their carriages in a state of prostration. These functions are especially valued by the younger Americans, as they afford them an excuse for showing themselves afterwards in the restaurants, dressed in finery that their colleagues in London and Paris are debarred from wearing, and that Washington tolerates rather than approves. The men from the other embassies go home and get into civil clothes before going out to luncheon. The Americans take a keen delight in the diplomatic game and, as they do not always know the rules, give considerable amusement to the rest of the diplomatic corps. I remember that the news that a lady of the American embassy had tried to dismiss the Dowager Empress was received with great joy. The transgressor had been received by the Empress at the Anitchkoff Palace, and, after a quarter of an hour's conversation, expressed the fear that she was encroaching on the royal lady's time. The Empress pointed out, in good colloquial English, that she would state when she had done with her. Unconscious of the enormity of her blunder, the lady naïvely told the story. It would be in the interests of the peace of Europe if all diplomatists were compelled to be celibates. While I was in St. Petersburg an ambassadress ruined her husband's career by want of tact. She gave a party which she intended to be brilliant, and not over-

crowded, and she offended at least a hundred persons by eliminating their names from her usual list of guests. Applications for invitations began to arrive. A lady-in-waiting on one of the Grand Duchesses wrote to ask if she might bring the two nieces she was trying to dispose of that season. The request was refused. The wife of a cabinet minister desired to bring her niece. That request was also refused. The lady induced her husband to speak politely, but firmly, on the subject to the Ambassador. He did so, and his words went home; for the day after the interview between the two men, a letter was received by the Minister's wife to say that she might bring her niece to the party. The note, unhappily, was couched in so ungracious a form that, in the circumstances and after all the pother, the young lady was left at home, and her aunt, who was not a woman to flinch at duty, went to the party with a smile on her lips and vengeance in her heart. She found an ally in the distinguished editor of a clever review, and a few days later she read with glee a biting attack on the husband of the tactless Ambassadress in its columns. Many causes had contributed to make the position of the Ambassador difficult, and this affront was the climax — he resigned.

To tell the truth, the outlook of this artificial world has changed little since Mme de Sévignée

wrote the famous description of the exiled Queen of England's visit to the daughter-in-law of Louis XIV. I thought of her anxiety to find out the exact number of rooms through which the French King had conducted the Queen on that occasion, when a Russian diplomatist came, in a state of great flutter, to tell me that an event of very great importance had happened during the meeting of the Tsar and King Edward at Revel. I was prepared to hear that a treaty had been signed and sealed aboard the *Standart*.

"A most extraordinary thing has happened," he said; "the Emperor accompanied the King to the bottom of the companion, when he left the Imperial yacht, while, on a similar occasion, he shook hands with the Kaiser at the top. Everybody is talking about it, and you must realize the importance of the Imperial gesture."

He scorned the explanation that the Emperor's politeness was merely deference to age. It had, he was convinced, the highest political significance.

The joy of a diplomatic corps is consummated when a sovereign breaks the rules. Kings who visit the Russian Court are put to the test by being made to receive the entire diplomatic body in the Winter Palace. The diplomatists stand in groups round an immense apartment in the palace, and the King's duty is to say something graceful, tactful, and sagacious to the members of each

embassy or legation. After giving private audience to the ambassadors, the sovereign, accompanied by his suite, enters the hall, and proceeds to the first group. As he does so, the next group retires a few paces to indicate that they have no desire to hear the gracious words addressed to their colleagues. The Tsar of Bulgaria took two hours to discharge this task, and conducted himself in a manner which warranted the unstinted praise of his critical guests. The King of Servia, on the contrary, hurried through the business in twenty minutes, and his remarks were a supreme joy to those honoured by hearing them. The question he put to the Persian chargé d'affaires: "Comment va votre petit Shah?" was repeated at a hundred dinner tables that evening. And he was considered to have surpassed himself when he told the representative of one of the South American states that he had known one of his compatriots in Paris, and added: "C'était un homme excessivement riche, comme il a fait la bombe!" Living in an artificial atmosphere, moving in purely official and military society, unable to speak the language of the country, the foreign diplomat in St. Petersburg is, as a rule, profoundly ignorant of the life and thought of Russia.

Inability to speak Russian does not debar an educated foreigner from enjoying Russian society. All Russians of the upper classes speak French, a

language they are taught from babyhood by French *bonnes* and governesses, and they often speak English and German also. A man who cannot speak three or four languages is hardly considered well educated. Formerly persons of fashion preferred to speak French and regarded Russian as a language to be used in addressing their serfs. This custom is almost dead. I knew one family in which French was always employed, and I remember a case of two Russian ladies who found it difficult to carry on a conversation because the one, the wife of a priest, spoke French very badly, and the other, an old woman, had never mastered her native language. Great numbers of people speak both languages with equal ease, and it is not unusual to hear a sentence begun in French and ended in Russian. I have even heard boys from the privileged schools, reserved for the sons of nobles, chattering together in French. The Russians have discovered that their language is a rich and a beautiful one. Tourguenieff speaks somewhere of the " yapping of French in the air " ; Russian is soft and melodious, and hard and nasal sounds, which remain in Polish, a language bearing a close resemblance to it, have been almost entirely eliminated. The Cyrillic alphabet in which it is written suits the genius of the language. The Poles represent the frequently occurring combination of consonants "shch" by the letters "szcz";

the Russians have a single letter to take the place of the four. The alphabet should be mastered by any foreigner who intends to visit Russia, otherwise he will find it impossible to read the names of streets and railway stations or public notices. As an indication of the mobility of the Russian language it may be mentioned that there are two forms of the verbs, sometimes entirely different words, one of which denotes that an act has been done once and the other that it has been done several times. To give an instance: if I wish to say that I spoke to a person, meaning that I made a statement on a particular occasion, I must say *ya skazal* (I spoke); if, however, I desire to convey that I spoke many times I must employ another form of the verb and say *ya gavoril* (I spoke). The two forms are very often similar, as *zanimat* and *zanyat*, both of which must be translated in English by the same infinitive, to borrow. One syllable, and one only, in each word is strongly accented; the rest are glided over. In Polish, stress is always placed on the last syllable but one; in Russian there is no rule, and a foreigner faced with a word of four or five syllables usually contrives to place the stress on the wrong one. Occasionally this alters the sense of a word. *Zamok*, for instance, means a castle when the stress is laid on the first syllable, and a lock when the second syllable is accented. Russians never laugh at the efforts of a

foreigner to speak their language; on the contrary, they usually assure him that he speaks delightfully, and are genuinely pleased to find he is taking the trouble to learn. It is a beautiful tongue, soft and caressing, a language to make love in.

The Russian novel, written by a foreigner who has never been in Russia, invariably gives the reader the impression that Russian society is exceedingly wealthy and exceedingly brilliant. Marvellously beautiful princesses, wrapped in priceless sable with enormous emeralds in their ears, glide across the ice on silver skates with fabulously rich and devil-may-care counts and barons. The writers of the entertaining books in which foreign traditions of Russian life are conserved ignore the fact that the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1865 has made a material change in Russian society. Before the great reform of Alexander II. the upper classes had their serfs to work for them and to earn money for them. The labourers who tilled the nobleman's estate were his property. Some of them he trained to serve in his house, and, when he came to the capital, he brought with him a train of maids and lacqueys, who were as much his property as his horses and dogs. Rich people sometimes had a few of their serfs trained as musicians in order to have their own orchestras for balls and routs. Many serfs were taught handicrafts and sent into the great cities

to earn money for their owners. A man's wealth was estimated by the number of souls he possessed. Now people tell one stories of the relations between their grandparents and the serfs, and they go to the Alexander Theatre to see *Khlopwy*, a piece which depicts the vanished society based on serfdom. Many of the nobles were ruined by the reform of the Tsar Spasityel (the Tsar Liberator), and the splendour of St. Petersburg society disappeared. There are a few wealthy families, but the majority of the persons who form the society of St. Petersburg are not rich.

The rank and file of the Russian nobility may be seen at the great ball given every winter by the naval cadets at their school on Vassili Island. The lads are all members of noble families, and their great hall, the largest in St. Petersburg, is packed to suffocation with their relations. The ball is one of the events of the season and is usually attended by the ambassadors and ministers. A few elegant women are to be seen in the crush, and the uniforms of the men give colour, but most of the ladies are not well dressed. Russian women are too sensible to stay away from an entertainment to which they wish to go because they do not possess smart frocks. Its simplicity is one of the most pleasing features of Russian society. Rank, inherited or gained in the service of the State, is the passport into it, and money does not gain admission

for its possessor. Jews are excluded, merchants have too painful a code of table manners to be admissible, the most talented of the literary men of the day are the opponents of society, as at present constituted, and therefore eschew it. There is one hostess in St. Petersburg who makes her house the meeting-place for agreeable and clever people, irrespective of rank or party, but she remains the proverbial exception.

Sometimes the financial straits of glittering personages are revealed in a manner that is at once painful and ludicrous. One Twelfth Day I met an old general, covered with decorations and orders, at the Court ceremony performed in commemoration of the baptism of Christ. He told me that his hobby was photography, and when the Tsar and the Grand Dukes came down to the lake in the gardens of the palace at Tsarskoe Selo to assist at the blessing of the waters, he took a number of photographs of the scene. We exchanged cards and a few days later he called on me. We made polite conversation for some time and I learnt that he had been a member of the suite of Alexander III., and also that his collection of Russian and foreign orders was so great that he could not wear them all at the same time. He drank a liqueur with zest and then suggested that I might like to see the photographs he had taken at Tsarskoe. I thought it very friendly of him. He carefully

arranged a dozen pictures in correct order on the table. They were excellent photographs and he seemed gratified at my praise. After I had exhausted adjectives in expressing admiration he put the pictures in his pocket and turned to go. At the door he turned and said wistfully: "I thought you might like to buy some of them for English papers: the price is ten roubles each." I did not want them and was so taken aback that I let him go without getting even one. Later I had need of some pictures and went to see him. He lived in a mean street and his flat had a poverty-stricken air. I bought one or two photographs and the old man told me his story very simply and very briefly. "My father died," he said, "and left me no other fortune than a sacred icon as his blessing. I have a family to support and no means but my little pension, so I work as a photographer."

There are many persons of rank who have spent their best years in the service of the State and find themselves in similar straits. Occasionally they emerge from obscurity and exercise the right they possess to walk through the rooms of an ambassador or a minister at an official reception.

But not to end a chapter, that opened with some promise of presenting a picture of brilliant frivolity, with a tale of shabby gentility, let me tell another which the novelists can take, if they like, as proof that I have traduced them.

It was New Year's Eve and I had been asked to a supper-party at the Medvyed, the biggest restaurant in St. Petersburg. Every table in the great hall had been taken days in advance, and when I arrived half an hour before midnight the place was filled with a gay crowd. There were pretty women in Paris frocks and diamonds who scintillated in society, prettier women in prettier frocks and more diamonds who had to scintillate outside it, beautiful officers in uniforms which would have made the success of a comic opera, men from ministries and embassies—in fact, as somebody said, *tout Pétersbourg* was there, a remark that was doubtless made simultaneously in Contant's and Cubat's. A band played waltzes and the music of the wicked *czardaš*, under the baton of a Hungarian maestro, and at midnight the figures one, nine, nought, six, flashed out in electric light on the wall. The band began "God save the Tsar," and everybody rose, clinked glasses, and wished good luck to their friends. People clapped their hands when the band stopped, and the musicians had to play the national anthem again. There was a beautiful woman in a lace dress at the table next to mine. Her hair was white, but her delicate face quite young, and she made me think of paintings on ivory of beauties of the eighteenth century. I raised my glass to her and she smiled, for convention was banished a moment while people were

insisting that the national anthem should be played a third time. At two o'clock in the morning champagne corks were still popping, the band was playing a rag-time, there was laughter and the sound of merry voices, and then, one, two, three, four, five, the sharp crack of a revolver. I rushed with other men to the centre of the restaurant, from whence the noise of the shooting had come, and saw a tall man with blood streaming down the front of his shirt from a gash at the side of his neck. The people near him pawed at him in a feeble way, as if they wanted to grapple with him, but were afraid. It looked as if a dozen men wanted to finish a murder and had not the courage. But the tall man was not the victim; he was the murderer, and had been wounded by a blow dealt with a champagne bottle. On the ground, in a pool of blood, was a boy in a student's uniform. A young Irishman, whom I knew, was kneeling at his side.

"Get a doctor," he said to me; "he is still living."

A moment later the lad expired.

I once read a description of this scene in a book on Russia with a flaming title. The author made the band go on playing many a merry cake-walk and those Russian men and women sit down again to supper, while all the time lay—that, and he had the pronoun printed in capital letters. In

point of fact, those Russian men and women did exactly what English men and women would do if a man was murdered at supper in the Ritz. Some of the ladies fainted, people took their wives and daughters home, without even waiting to pay their bills, and the musicians fled and did not return. One woman was so frightened that she got under a table and besought the man she found there to take her home if he loved her as a husband should. She probably recovered her nerve when they crawled out together and she discovered her companion to be a Tatar waiter.

The body of the murdered boy could not be moved until the police had been to write a protocol, and they did not appear for three-quarters of an hour. It was covered with tablecloths, and, when most people had gone, a scene took place beside it that I should think more improbable than the most unconvincing scene of transpontine melodrama, had I not seen it played. A woman, known in the Bohemian world as La Truite de Gatchina, stood with her adherents on one side of the corpse and hurled abuse, like a fishwoman, at a party of people at the other side of the body. She was defending the murderer. A young actor, whose face was pale as death, confronted her and confuted her statements in an oration delivered in a tone of white-hot passion. Suddenly she abandoned the contest, turned round, and went to a

distant table, where she sat down and drank champagne.

As for me, I gratefully accepted a cup of black coffee, and then I heard what had led to the murder. The murderer had picked a quarrel with the student because the boy had refused to stand up during the performance of the national anthem. A woman with him had urged him to avenge the insult to the Emperor, and he had heaped up abuse until the boy had drawn his sword. Then he had shot him dead.

PEASANTS IN THE COURTYARD OF A MONASTERY.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LEVELLING PROCESS

THE class to which a Russian belongs is inscribed on the passport he is bound to possess. It is there stated whether he is a nobleman, an hereditary citizen, a member of the merchant or of the clerical class, a townsman or a peasant. These distinctions have become to a certain extent artificial, but they still remain important and make intercourse between persons of different rank easier than in countries where social distinctions are less definite. As a man's position in society is defined by law, it is useless for him to put forward vague pretensions to be of better birth than he actually is. The peasant accepts the legal assumption that he is the inferior of the noble, and combines childlike familiarity with respect in his dealings with his superiors. There is a scene in a Russian comedy that appears natural enough to a Russian, but that would be ununderstandable to an English audience. A lady arrives at her country house after being abroad for a long time, and four or five peasants come to welcome her back. They sit

with her in the drawing-room and talk of a hundred and one things, and they are neither sheepish nor embarrassed. In England and America the lower classes are kept in their place by the coolness of the upper classes; in Russia there is no reason to be cool, because it does not occur to a peasant to get out of his place. You may tell him the secrets of your soul, and he will not be in the least surprised if you swear at him the next moment. I have seen a rich peasant, wearing a peasant's dress, come into a fashionable restaurant in St. Petersburg, and lunch at a table next that of an officer of the guards. The peasant was not ashamed of being a peasant, and nobody resented or was surprised at his appearance. The agreeable relations between persons of different rank will doubtless be changed for the worse with the spread of education; the process must, however, be a slow one, and Russia will be free for many years from the inconveniences which arise from teaching the common people to read and write. The revolutionary parties tried to hasten the levelling process by propagating the doctrines of Socialism among the peasants, and in many parts of the country they rose against the gentry during the days of the unsuccessful revolution; but in spite of this teaching and the excesses that it inspired, the peasants have for the most part preserved the dignity and humility which make them so lovable.

The cabmen of the towns are usually peasants and display no symptoms of having embraced democratic doctrines. They may be called little pigeons, little brothers, little fathers, darlings, and fools. They resent neither endearment nor abuse, and call their fares Barin or Barina, lord or lady, the form of address usually employed by persons of the lower classes when speaking to superiors, and sometimes they say Your, an elliptical title, perhaps adopted from tact in order to avoid saying High Nobility to a person who has the right to be called Excellency or Serenity. Peasants sometimes use terms of endearment in addressing persons they assume to be their superiors, and I have been called darling by an aged and profoundly respectful peasant in a provincial town. A Russian friend of mine was once sharply reminded of the difference in the relations of high and low in a democratic country to those existing in her own land. She spoke to a Paris cabman in the second person singular, as she would have done in Russia. He turned on her at once with the words: "Alors, tu m'aimes, ma petite mère!"

In the great towns numbers, probably the majority, of the workmen are Socialists and no longer believe that class distinctions are made by divine providence. Public demonstrations, formidable strikes, and serious riots have signalized their determination not to acquiesce in the old

order. The Government succeeded in repressing revolution, but it cannot crush the spirit that engendered it. The imprisonment of Socialist leaders for spreading the doctrines they hold in common with Socialists in Germany or England, even when represented as punishment for conspiring to change the order of the State, is a device savouring too much of persecution to be successful. The Government's attempt to stamp out the political and social opinions it holds to be harmful has increased the determination of the people to act on them. Even an idler in St. Petersburg, deprived of opportunities of coming into contact with the working classes, cannot escape the evidence of the new spirit which animates them. His newspaper is perpetually telling him that the police have been making nocturnal visits to workmen's houses in the capital, or in other great cities, and seizing quantities of socialistic literature. The views of their leaders appear in the parliamentary news. Occasionally fashionable society drives to the Tauride Palace to hear an important debate and has to listen to a Socialist speaker. The most brilliant members of the party are either abroad or in prison. Aladin, whose speeches were a feature of the debates of the first Duma, has taken refuge in England. The Socialists of the second Duma were arrested immediately after its dissolution and are now prisoners. Their work

was continued by others in the third Duma. One afternoon there had been an important debate on foreign affairs, and M. Izvolsky, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, had spoken. A few friends congratulated him afterwards in the buffet, but most of the smart people who had flocked into the room from the galleries of the house were not talking of the Minister's speech; they were expressing admiration of the eloquence of a young Socialist, Pokrovsky, whose speech had provided the most notable feature of the debate.

And there are straws to show the way the wind is blowing. A couple of small boys are rowing a boat on the Neva, and they sing the "Marseillaise" lustily. The coffin of a workman, covered with a blood-red flag, passes through the streets, and the people following it on foot sing a forlorn hymn in praise of those who give up all for liberty. A serving-man calls a gentleman *gospodin*, which means mister, eschewing the title that implies disparity of rank. Waiters go on strike and demand, among other things, that customers shall no longer call them *tchelovyek*, which means man in the sense of *homo* and not of *vir*.

These things are symptomatic of the endeavour to level society by raising the status of the lower classes. The opposite process is also to be remarked. The nobles are so numerous that many of them inevitably sink in the social scale until

they are indistinguishable from members of the lower classes. In England ruthless pruning has kept the nobility a rich and exceedingly small class. In Russia all the descendants of an hereditary nobleman are noble, and all the descendants of princes, counts, and barons enjoy the right to use those titles. Hence there are rich princes and poor princes, princes with distinguished manners and princes with no manners, elegant princes and princes you could not possibly be seen walking down Piccadilly with, princes in palaces and princes in garrets, princes who are desirable *partis* and princes who advertise in the newspapers for wives with money. A glance at the St. Petersburg directory and a rough calculation show that there are some two hundred men, women, and children in the capital alone who all belong to the same princely family and bear the same name and exalted title.

The first prince I met in St. Petersburg was the head waiter of the Hôtel de France. He had an incontestable right to the title, and was an excellent servant. His case, however, ought not to be cited as an instance of the decay of the Russian nobility, for he was a Tatar from a part of the Caucasus where princes were so abundant that, when Russia acquired it, only those who could produce a certain number of sheep were granted the legal right to preserve the title. Many borrowed sheep for the

purpose, and princes are so common at the present day that beggar boys in Tiflis give the title to each other. The tale of a prince with a name celebrated in Russian history, whom I used to meet in the house of a respectable family of the lower middle class, is more germane to the matter in hand than that of the waiter. He was an elderly man, and on occasions demanding evening dress appeared in an ancient frock-coat with an evening necktie. The first time I spoke with him he talked red-hot revolution.

"It is rare to hear a man of your name express such sentiments," I said.

"The French Revolution had its Mirabeau," he answered superbly.

When a young man he had made considerable sacrifices to the socialistic cause, but abandoned an heroic part in later years. He lived frugally on the small salary he received as a clerk in a Government office, and a year or two after I met him contracted a marriage of convenience with an elderly woman possessed of modest but adequate means. She was pleased to find herself a princess, but excessively annoyed when her prince moved his worldly goods to her house in one small portmanteau.

"Quel prince!" she said in high dudgeon.

A few weeks after the marriage I met him in the street.

"How is the Princess?" I asked.

He did not know. He had left her.

"C'est une femme avec l'esprit d'une vache," he explained.

He was once more living in a wretched lodging. Six months passed and we met again.

"Come and see me," he said; "I desire to present you to the Princess."

I do not seek to pry into the curious vicissitudes of the lives of my married friends, and I asked nothing but went. The Princess was not at home, and I remained to have dinner with her husband, a meal he ate at five o'clock in the afternoon. It was a wholesome, if inelegant, repast, and the Prince, with a napkin stuck into his collar, would have made a person whose ideas of Russian life are derived from novels of the type of that excellent story, *My Official Wife*, open his eyes very widely.

In the kingdom of Poland, where nobles are as common as in Russia, although titles are not so numerous, people distinguish between the *petite noblesse* and the *grande noblesse*, between the aristocracy and the nobility. All nobles have the right to display coronets, and the privilege is so common that servants, whether they possess the right or not, very often embroider them on their sheets and pillow-cases, and their employers are no more surprised than English people would be if

they found their butlers dubbed esquire on the envelopes of letters. I once asked the son of a postman why he had a coronet on his handkerchief.

"I have a right to it," he said stiffly.

Russian nobles do not have blue blood; they have white bones. Common people have black bones. In spite of the levelling of society by the debasement of the nobility, great importance is attached to the possession of the white bone. A story of two shop-assistants, told me by their employer, Moscow's universal provider, illustrates the point.

He was only a townsman, and she was a maiden of high degree. They worked together behind the same counter, and, in the way young people have, fell in love. There were walks together when the shop was closed, and secret meetings, and the foolish paraphernalia of courting. In due course the young man called on his sweetheart's father to demand her hand in proper form. There were cogent reasons for the speedy celebration of the marriage; but the father preferred a stain on his daughter's reputation to a stain on the family escutcheon.

"We are noble," he said proudly; "my daughter cannot marry a townsman."

The reader is not to conjure up a picture of an impoverished, but refined and cultured aristocrat,

whose daughter, deprived of the advantages due to her rank, heroically determined to support her father in his declining years by following a humble avocation. It would not be surprising to find them both highly deficient in table manners, and it probably never occurred to the daughter that it was unsuitable for a person of her rank to be a shop-girl. It was, according to their employer, impossible to detect any difference of manner or bearing between her and her lover. An examination of their passports alone would have supplied proof that there was a discrepancy of rank between two commonplace young persons.

The veneration of the German nobility of the Russian Baltic provinces for the white bone amounts to a superstition. I came across an odd instance of it a short time ago in Berlin. A young nobleman from this part of Russia had fallen in love with the widow of a Prussian baron. The lady was noble by virtue of her marriage, but she was not noble by birth. Her lover knew that his parents would be deeply pained if they discovered that the purity of the family was to be tainted with plebeian blood, and he was therefore taking elaborate means to conceal the origin of the woman he wished to make his wife. According to Prussian law a childless couple, both of whom are over fifty years of age and of noble birth, can adopt a son or daughter who, in this way, becomes ennobled. The

filial young man from the Baltic provinces was advertising in one of the Berlin newspapers for a nobleman and his wife to adopt the Baroness, and was prepared to pay a handsome sum for the service. I never heard whether he succeeded in his quest. I cling to the hope that the story has a happy ending, but, for aught I know, it may have turned into a tale of parted lovers or of disinheritance and broken-hearted parents.

Russians who are unfamiliar with English life are sometimes surprised to find some English acquaintance is not noble. One night after dinner in a Polish country house a guest with whom I was talking assumed that I was a nobleman, and I told him that I was nothing of the kind.

"But," he said, in a puzzled way, "the Duke of Norfolk, for instance, could not eat any better than you do."

I said I supposed he could not, and, although I offered an explanation of the phenomenon he had observed, I left him still puzzling over the fact that an Englishman who was not a nobleman could manipulate a soup-spoon with decency.

Now, as a matter of fact, a large proportion of the people to be met in that section of Russian society corresponding to what is called the upper middle class in England are nobles, but in circles coloured by more or less Liberal political views rank counts very little and culture a great deal. Thus, persons

who, in the eye of the law, belong to different classes, are welded into one by community of interests and the bond of education. The old class terminology has to a great extent lost its significance, and a new name has had to be found for the class created by the union of persons of different ranks. The word devised for the purpose is *intelligentzia*. The conception is a fine one: the passport to society should be intellectual enlightenment. The fashionable society of St. Petersburg is amusing, but the *intelligentny* society of the capital is infinitely more interesting. One of its chief gathering-places is the Women's Club, to which some of the most interesting political and literary men belong. The statement is a little anomalous and requires explanation. There used to be a club in St. Petersburg called the Cadet Club, founded by the leaders of the political party, that exercised the greatest power in the first and second Dumas. The police were at the pains to shut it up, and the progressive women of the capital hit on the plan of opening a club and inviting the homeless Cadets to join it. Membership was not confined to those in sympathy with the Cadet policy, and some of the most notable people in St. Petersburg were to be met at this club. Conferences on questions of the day were held there regularly in winter, and there was a good deal of informal interchange of ideas in the smoking-room

and the restaurant. I do not think it entered anybody's head to inquire to what class a member legally belonged. Nothing was demanded except that he should be agreeable and interesting.

During the specious days of the first and second Dumas the lobby of the House was the most popular meeting-place of the *intelligentzia*. The Tauride Palace, built by Catharine II. for Marshal Potyomkin, in recognition of his conquest of the Crimea, had been turned into a parliament house. To the Catharine Hall, an enormous apartment of the Palace where the hero gave magnificent entertainments in honour of the Empress, came people of every class, sanguine, exalted, believing that by some magic the Duma would transform Russia into a modern, constitutional State and redress the grievances of centuries in a night. And everybody talked. Ladies walked up and down in earnest conversation with peasant members. Student girls buttonholed men whose names had suddenly become household words. A peasant arrived to pray the mighty Duma to say the word and put right the wrongs of a village five hundred miles away, and, while he waited for an easy miracle, sat on the yellow brocade cushions of a Louis XVI. bench talking to an elegant woman and a prince. Those were the days of fancied victory, when the bureaucracy was thought to tremble before the imperious will of the people.

In sign thereof one might buy a postcard at the bookstall with a picture of the Palace, surrounded by portraits of popular members, and a great mound of sculls before the portal, below which were written the opening words of a revolutionary song, "You fell as victims," and the inscription: "Citizens, remember always that you went to freedom over the bodies of your BROTHERS." It was not in vain that men had eaten their hearts out in prison or rotted in Siberia; and who dared to think of petty distinctions between man and man in the glory of receiving an inheritance bought by the blood of martyrs? It was all a little foolish, and very natural, and very touching.

The Russian Government is commonly supposed to have no other aim than to conserve things as they are. No greater mistake could be made; the Government itself takes a hand in the process of levelling society. What more giant step in the process has been taken than the liberation of the serfs little more than fifty years ago? The Government denies to the noble who amuses himself, instead of working for the State, the right to go to Court, and it throws open the gates of the Imperial palace to men of humbler birth who have spent their lives in the service of the country. An acquaintance of mine, who was not noble, entered one of the ministries at the bottom of the

POSTCARD SOLD IN THE TAURIDE PALACE IN 1906.

ladder. By dint of hard work and the display of capacity he rose to a position which carried with it the right to the rank of personal nobility. The years passed and he became mechanically an hereditary nobleman. Your *intelligentny tchelovyek* (intelligent person) would scoff at such levelling efforts, but, though he may disapprove, he cannot scoff at the Government's efforts in this direction presented in the law of November 1906, which gives the peasants the right to acquire personal ownership of land which, before the passing of the Act, could not be alienated from the village communes. The tendency of this law, a Government measure, is to create a new class of yeoman farmers who, in course of time, will become members of the *intelligentny* class.

The charm of the *intelligentzia* is simplicity. The men and women who form it understand how to be merry without ostentation or expense. In England people of the middle class often keep to themselves, because, as they say, they cannot afford to entertain. The Russians are more sensible. They take it for granted that people go to each other's houses in order to have agreeable society, and that they can enjoy themselves without expensive food or elaborate devices of entertainment. They ask a few friends to come to evening tea. The company assembles about ten and sits round the dining-room table, on which is set out

no more elaborate provision than a samovar, a little cold meat, and rolls. The guests sip tea and talk of everything under heaven for a couple of hours. Two people find that they are interested in some subject to which the others are indifferent and retire to a divan to thrash it out. There may be music, if anybody who plays well be present; but one is not asked to listen to the immature performances of schoolgirls. I have been to dinner-parties in St. Petersburg at which the food was dull and the conversation enthralling: the reverse is so often the case in London. A large evening party, given in honour of the Bishop of Wilna and the Polish members of the first Duma, was, in the phrase of the reporters, both brilliant and successful, and it probably cost the hostess thirty shillings. She gave us tea and sandwiches, with a little claret in the background about which nobody bothered.

It would be a mistake to think that the chief amusement of the *intelligentzia* is the discussion of politics and the state of the country. On the contrary, they can be frivolous on occasion, as Alexandra Ivanovna made me understand one night when, without a word of warning, she asked me to come to a masquerade at her house. We were drinking tea in the Women's Club after listening to speeches for about three hours on the situation in Persia. Of all people in the world

Alexandra Ivanovna seemed the least likely to indulge in the frivolity of a masquerade, and I told her so.

"You," I said, "who play a bigger part in politics than any woman in St. Petersburg; you, whose speeches on the rights of women are printed in the papers through the length and breadth of Russia; you, of all women, ask a serious person like myself to dress up in motley and make an idiot of himself for an entire evening!"

Then we both laughed and, of course, I accepted the invitation. And the masquerade was delightful. As one began to make out who were the revellers, one found that most of them were famous in the political and artistic worlds of St. Petersburg. For a long time nobody could discover the identity of a girl dressed as a doll, but at last she revealed herself as the wife of a Socialist member of the first Duma. The last time I had visited her house was to congratulate her husband on his release from prison. I found him giving tips to the unhappy editor of a newspaper, who was expecting to go to prison in the course of a few days. A sad young man, hired for the evening, played lilting Russian music on an accordion as they do in the villages. We waltzed decorously, tore down the room in the maddest of all dances, the mazurka, or took hands and rushed round in a whirling ring. I waltzed with a giddy, but very

old, lady, who danced abominably and turned out to be a young man. There was a dark-eyed girl in a fascinating Tatar dress, who waltzed like an angel. She had dark eyes and spoke with a certain charming timidity. I put her down as a chit of a girl who had just left school, and I was entirely wrong.

At two o'clock in the morning, when people were beginning to go, Alexandra Ivanovna, the serious Alexandra Ivanovna, remarked that those of us who liked might as well go on to a masquerade at somebody else's house. The dark-eyed girl decided that she and I waltzed so well together that we would foot it at the other side of the town. A dozen of us got into sledges and glided over the frozen roads to our unknown destination, led by Alexandra Ivanovna. The new hostess did not betray any annoyance at our arrival, though she probably wondered who we were. I am sure I wondered who she was. I walked about asking people, and they all said they had not the faintest idea. As somebody remarked, it really did not matter, as we were never likely to see her again. She appeared to have literary tastes, for there were two young poets on the premises, one of whom, a nice creature, but quite mad, I had met before. He wandered aimlessly from room to room, and we were asked not to bother him, as it was believed he was in the throes of beautiful ideas. Perhaps

he was, for he ended by coming up to me and saying solemnly—

"Young man, do you know what life is?"

I shook my head sadly.

"Life," he said, "is art, and art is life."

He glided away, and, connecting the aphorism with his rather unsteady and after-supper walk, I pardoned it.

The other poet was a smart little man, whose perverse poems rise to such a height of decadence, if the expression be allowed, that they are occasionally suppressed by the censor.

Most of us ate a second supper. As I have said, Russians know how to enjoy themselves cheaply. Our hostess had spread the table in her dining-room with simple viands; she also gave us tea, bottled beer, and innocuous wine. The whole show cost, I should think, about three pounds, and we enjoyed it as much as if it had cost three hundred. The dark-eyed girl and I had our waltz. Then she was whirled away by the eccentric poet, and I sat down to talk to a girl I did not know, who had revolutionary tendencies in most directions. We spoke about the other girl, the chit of a schoolgirl, "wondering what the world may be," as I had told myself.

"Her husband," said the revolutionary girl slowly, "was sentenced to death for taking part in one of the great expropriations," and she recalled

to my memory one of the wild episodes of the Revolution, when a vast sum of money had been seized and several soldiers and policemen were killed.

"The sentence was commuted," she added, "and he is imprisoned in the Fortress of Schlusselburg for life."

A PEASANT BOY AND HIS HOME.

# CHAPTER V

## COUNTRY LIFE

When the snow melts and the long winter is gone, the inhabitants of the great Russian cities abandon them to house-painters and road-menders and migrate to the country. Those who have estates go to them, and the less fortunate transfer themselves, their families, and their household goods to hired houses a few miles from their winter homes. These houses are called *datchas*. They are usually built of wood and only intended to be occupied in summer-time. They may be large and convenient villas with gardens, or cottages set in a row. The rent of a tiny *datcha* for the season may be no more than five pounds. The country round St. Petersburg is transformed in summer into a vast garden city, and the pleasant shores of the Finnish Gulf are studded with the temporary homes of the emigrants for many miles from the capital.

It is a joyful day when one sees tables and chairs, beds and trunks, pots and pans, all piled up in a waggon to go to the *datcha*. Good-bye for four

halcyon months to the town and its restrictions, and, all the summer long, the simple life and freedom by the pale sea and in the odorous pine forests. For six months, or more, one has been cooped in hot rooms and waddled through the streets in heavy furs and clumsy goloshes; from Advent to Easter the city has been covered with a mantle of snow, and the Neva has been a highway crossed by a railway laid on the ice. One is weary of the soiled whiteness of the city and dreary skies, and waits impatiently for the signs that spring is coming. At last the day comes when everybody repeats the news that the ice in the Neva is cracking, and, a fortnight later, when the river is freed from its prison, people walk on the quays to see the broken ice from Lake Ladoga, like flocks of white swans, floating down to the sea. The days grow long, and the trees in the Summer Garden are covered with tender buds. The gardeners take away the boards with which the marble gods of that pleasant place have been sheltered from the cold, and above them are waving leafy branches, and at their feet an emerald carpet. Away to *datcha* land!

And the *datchniki*, the dwellers in *datchas*, understand the art of dawdling. Some must go up to the city by early trains to work; the rest sit on balconies drinking tea, walk in the woods, or run a quarter of a mile out into the shallow sea. The

women are at their ease in cotton wrappers, and their hats have been left in the city. The young men and boys wear blouses—white, blue, red, orange—instead of coats. What does it matter what one wears and how one looks? One is at the *datcha*. At night there may be a play at a little wooden theatre, or a game of cards on the balcony. Who wants to go to bed when the sun dies, and rises again near midnight, and the crimson glow behind the pine trees is the god's jest to make men think that darkness is coming? Far into the night there is singing and the fluttering music of balalaikas.

One summer evening, seven years ago, I went an hour's journey from St. Petersburg to sup with Maxim Gorki in Kuokola, across the Finnish border. The pottering train stopped at many stations, and in all of them *datchniki* were sitting, just to see who might come and who might go away. Gorki's *datcha* stood in a wood, and, as I approached it, I saw a beautiful woman in a filmy dress coming towards me. She came down the sunny pathway lightly, as though she were afraid to tread on the delicate carpet of trembling shadows, the silver birch trees beneath which she walked spread for her feet. It was Mme Andreeva, whom Gorki loved. The men and women of their world thought that love was marriage, and when love was gone and the lovers parted marriage bonds were sundered. And when Gorki

took this woman, whom he held to be his wife, to another world across the Atlantic, they were banned like lepers because their code was not that of the people of the land in which they found themselves. A priest or a magistrate has made a legal bond between them now, and the world they left thought they had broken love's law in submitting to society's. And Mme Andreeva welcomed me and took me to the house. Supper was spread on a great table set in the balcony, and there were a dozen guests, disciples in peasants' blouses, young men dreaming of a new Russia in which poverty would disappear with the golden crosses of the churches, and happiness dawn as the flickering lamps before ancient shrines were extinguished. Youth and hope and fancied freedom made them gay; but Gorki was morose and hardly spoke. He sat by the gracious woman who had thrown in her lot with his, and when their eyes met his gloom vanished for a moment in a smile. The others were chattering and laughing with the zest of children. A young man jumped up from the table and pretended to work a saw and to plane the balustrade of the balcony. He imitated the noise of the processes so cleverly that our teeth were set on edge, and even Gorki laughed. And when I rose to go, Mme Andreeva said to me: "You must think we are mad," and her son, a boy of seventeen, lifted her from the ground. "But we are mad,"

he said gaily. And he was wrong. The northern summer is so short, the winter comes so swiftly, that it is only those who are not sane who do not spend it looking into the face of the sun and laughing.

Life in a Russian country house is as simple and as free as in a *datcha*. On the journey from the capital to some distant estate one is not haunted by the fear that, after all, studs or evening ties have not been packed. Such vanities belong to the abnormal life of the town; a change of shirts and a toothbrush are sufficient impedimenta for a week-end at a country house. A *troika*, an open carriage with three horses abreast, driven by a coachman in a peasant's frock and a cap decorated with peacock's feathers, probably awaits the guest at the station, and he may have to drive a dozen miles to arrive at his destination, some rambling house of white stucco with an apple-green roof.

There is an element of excitement in arriving at a Russian country house for the first time. In England one may speculate as to the exact manner in which the time between meals will be filled up, but one knows, as certainly as that night follows day, that one will be awakened to look at a teapot and thin bread and butter, and that, at a time which one can calculate to half an hour, the ceremonies of the day will culminate in dinner. In Russia

one does not know whether the door will be opened by an elegant footman or an unshaven peasant in an old tweed suit and a coloured collar. It is a matter of uncertainty whether it will occur to anybody to bring one shaving water in the morning. Meals may be elaborate and long, or the fare may be Spartan. The hostess may know at what time they are served, or she may not. I stayed once with a family, the head of which may be described as a county magnate, and nobody ever knew exactly when the next meal was coming. Dinner, one was vaguely told, was some time between two and three. I have subsisted on a diet of bread and butter and eggs, with a slice of meat in the middle of the day, in the home of a marshal of nobility. There was bread and butter and eggs for breakfast, bread and butter without eggs at six, more bread and butter and more eggs at ten. Dinner, consisting of soup, meat with vegetables, and coffee, was served at two.

"And of course you never went there again," said an Englishman, to whom I told these facts.

I did not; but I hope to do so next summer, for the host and his wife are two of the most delightful and cultured people I know.

Russians open their eyes very widely when they hear how people live in English country houses. They say politely that it must be very beautiful, but I think in their hearts they regard it as we our-

THE BOYS WHO PLAYED GORODKI.

selves do the elaborate etiquette of life in the time of Louis XVI.

Beyond the grounds of the great house is probably a village, and the old people in it were serfs of the owner's father or grandfather. He speaks of them as his peasants and they consider themselves as in some sense belonging to him. They probably come and walk about his garden, and their children come to play with his. A peasant once complained to me bitterly that the Barin had forbidden the villagers to come into his garden, "just because they picked the flowers." At one estate the peasants were begged not to walk across the tennis lawn when a game was being played.

"But we are yours," they said.

At one house I used to sit at my window and watch the peasants amusing themselves in the swings the owner had had put up for them in the trees, and the boys flying round at the ends of the ropes of a giant stride. The village boys used to come and play *gorodki* (little cities) with the squire's children. *Gorodki* is an excellent game and was probably invented when Pskoff, and Novgorod, and Moscow were rival powers. The players are divided into two parties, and each side has a city, a circle drawn in the earth within which are nine little blocks of wood arranged in a certain manner. The cities are some twelve yards apart, and the players on either side take it in turn to

attack by throwing poles, about a yard long, at the opponent's city, with the object of hitting the little wooden blocks and casting them over the boundary of the circle surrounding them. The side which succeeds in doing this first wins the first round, and the blocks are then arranged in other and more difficult ways for the second and following rounds of the match. We used to find that the side which had most peasant lads usually won, for they practised the game with untiring energy in the village as well as on the path in front of the drawing-room windows of the great house.

These agreeable relations between gentry and peasants do not always obtain. The Russian peasant is an amiable and lovable creature, but he can, on occasion, suddenly turn into a monster. Revolutionary propaganda among the peasants has sometimes had terrible results. During the disorders of seven years ago, they rose in many places against the landowners. At the beginning of 1906, for instance, there was a jacquerie in the Government of Kherson, during which the peasants appeared to have gone mad. They destroyed houses, gardens, machinery, and agricultural implements. They clubbed to death calves, sheep, and lambs. They tied together by the tails draught oxen and horses and then discharged guns, so that the terrified animals tore the hair and flesh from each other in their efforts to escape.

Horses, fastened to the sails of windmills, were whirled through the air and disembowelled as they were dashed time after time against the ground. At night the peasants covered the bodies of horses with pitch, fastened blazing bundles of straw, soaked in kerosene, to their manes and tails, and watched them galloping across the fields until they sank and died.

In some places the peasants were more scientific in their methods. An acquaintance of mine stood watching the flames rising higher and higher up the walls of a house he had built on his estate, and the incendiaries came and explained to him why they had set fire to it.

"We decided to set fire to your house," they said, "because you are the best landowner in these parts, and, in selecting your property for destruction, we show that we are acting on principle and not in a spirit of vengeance."

I remember an old peasant getting into the tribune of the first Duma, waving his thin hands above his head, and shouting: "The land is ours, and we are going to have it."

To get more land was the chief object of the peasants who rose against the landowners. When the serfs were liberated they were given certain lands. That is more than half a century ago, and while the population has grown, the commune lands have not been increased and are often too

small for the needs of their possessors. The necessity of solving the problem which has thus arisen is one which the Government of a country in which the great majority of the inhabitants are agriculturists must face at recurring intervals. The plan adopted by the Russian Government in 1906 to improve the lot of the vast peasant population of the country was to make a radical change in the system under which they held their land. Until 1906 the peasants of a village held their lands in common ; under the new system a peasant may, if he desire, leave the commune and receive a certain portion of the commune lands as his personal property. Numbers of peasants are taking advantage of this right, and consider the law which has given it them a valuable reform.

Desiring to find out for myself the views of peasants on the question, I went to the little town of Strouka Byelaya, five hours' journey by train to the south of St. Petersburg, as a centre from which to visit the surrounding country. My first excursion was to Bobovischye, a village fifteen miles from the station. The situation there was peculiarly interesting, because fifteen members of the commune had decided to keep to the old system, as they had the right to do, while seventeen had left the commune and received their share of land to hold as personal property.

Within a mile of the village I fell in with a

peasant, Ivan Alexandroff by name, dressed in a coarse white linen tunic, mauve breeches, and bark shoes. We passed the time of day, and he told me he was one of the group of peasants who had left the commune.

"Well," I said, "and do you find the new system better than the old?"

"Of course it is better, your High Nobility," he said.

I asked his reason for this opinion.

"Is it not better to have one's land in a single plot than to have fifty *polosy*?" he answered.

Now it is impossible to understand the old land system unless one knows the significance of the term *polosa*. It is applied to the strips and morsels of ground into which the commune lands are ordinarily divided. As I was talking with Ivan I could see, to the right of the road, these *polosy*, varying in breadth from four to ten feet, stretching for perhaps a verst in parallel lines across the country. From the agricultural point of view this method of dividing the land is one of the chief disadvantages of the old system. The difficulty of cultivating a field four feet wide and a mile long is evident. It is not the only drawback. The number of strips belonging to a single peasant, and their distance from each other, greatly increase his work. I know cases in which one peasant has had more than a hundred strips of land, some as

small as four feet by ten, and as far as twenty miles from his home.

On the other side of the road were the lands held under the new system. I told Ivan I should like to see his *hutor*, or farm. We passed across a few fields and then he turned to me and said—

"Your High-born Nobility is now on my land. I have thirty-six acres, and I only came here ten months ago, so that there is still a great deal to do. But you can see that I have already made a canal to drain the marshy part of the ground."

"That must have cost a good deal," I said.

"Yes," he said; "it was dug by Lithuanians—that is their special work. I received a Government grant of 150 roubles, which also helped to bring my house from the village."

This is the maximum grant given to peasants starting life on a *hutor* under the new system. Nothing need be paid back for five years. Then ten years is allowed for repayment, and no interest is charged.

"The land about here is not good," explained Ivan; "but I am going to improve it, and I shall plant some fruit trees."

"But you could do all that when you were still a member of the commune," I said.

"How so?" he asked. "If I improved my *polosy*, another peasant who had neglected his might try to get them, and possibly succeed at the

THE OWNER OF A FARM AND HIS FAMILY.

redistribution of the commune lands, which, with us, took place every seven years."

Talking in this way we came to Ivan's house, a large wooden cottage with a few steps leading to a little balcony before the entrance. He invited me to enter. Within there was a short passage, the walls of which were of logs, with a door right and left and a third door at the end. The left door led into a granary, the right was the entrance to the one living-room of the cottage, and the door at the end led into a large stable, at a lower level than the rest of the house, in which Ivan's horse and cow were stalled.

The mistress of the house was spinning linen when we entered the living-room, and she rose to welcome me. Her manner was perfect. She told me that I had done her a great honour in coming, but contrived to give the impression that it was an honour to be received by her. She could neither read nor write, but she had the dignity of a great lady. The furniture of her house was primitive, and the great stove, with a flat stone top on which the family sleep in winter, was the most noticeable object in the large room. In one corner were the family icons and two little oleographs of the Tsar and Tsaritza.

The man who had driven me to the outskirts of the village had brought the post-chaise across the fields, and I asked if we might eat the food we had

with us. The woman put on a kettle to boil water for tea and offered to give us eggs. And when the coachman had come in, I found that I had made a grievous mistake. My provision consisted of slices of ham and sausage, and the coachman was forbidden to eat meat, because it was the Great Fast. I suggested that he could have some eggs, and was told that in Lent neither eggs, nor cheese, nor milk, were allowed. The poor fellow had to be content with a slice of black bread.

"My wife cried when we came here," said Ivan; "she found it lonesome. When our house was one of a row in the village there were always neighbours running in and out for a gossip."

"But I wouldn't be back in the village now," said the woman; "the children were always getting into trouble there and squabbling with the others. Here they can't get into mischief."

And when I left Ivan's home there was a tinge of envy in my heart. Its simplicity was imposing. I was a wanderer; Ivan had his castle, standing in the midst of fields which were his own, and would pass to his children. Most years no more than twenty-five roubles in money would pass through his hands; his estate supplied the needs of himself and his family. His barn was filled with corn he had toiled to raise. The clothes he wore had been woven and fashioned by the gracious woman who ruled his house and shared his troubles

and his joys. I must return to the panting life of cities and the strife of tongues; Ivan would grow old in communion with the wind, and the rain, and the sun, wresting a subsistence from the soil with the help of the saints whose pictures made his home a shrine. Yet I knew that I could not be happy in his place.

And in other cottages I heard the same praise of the new land system.

"It's ten times better," said one young peasant, the owner of twenty-seven acres. "I cannot tell you how many strips of land I had in the commune—I should think about fifty. But the time I wasted going from one to another! Now I have not to walk ten versts to do a bit of work, and all my land is round my house."

He took me to see his bath-house. Russians are exceedingly clean. In villages one may see a row of twenty cottages, and, thirty yards from them, a row of twenty bath-houses. The one the peasant showed me was a hut with a stove, intended to heat the great stones placed above it. On bath nights the stove is lit, and when the stones are hot a bucket of water is thrown on them, so that the place is filled with steam. The bather lies on a bench in the suffocating atmosphere, soaps himself, and ends his ablutions with ice-cold water. In town and country it is held to be a religious duty to take a steam bath once a week. Servants ask

if they can go out for a couple of hours to visit one of the great baths in the cities. They go away with clean linen bound up in a handkerchief and return shining with cleanliness. Admission to the cheapest part of a steam bath is usually a penny farthing, but in the great towns there are luxurious establishments frequented by the rich.

The peasants of Bobovischye were of a less intelligent type than those of the villages of the Yamburg district of the Government of St. Petersburg, which I visited later. Among the peasants I talked to there about the new system of land tenure was a Social Democrat who had worked for ten years as a mechanic in a factory in St. Petersburg. He returned to the country when he found that he could become owner of a definite plot of ground, and he had been working his farm for two years.

"In my opinion," he said, "the new system is better than the old, because there is now a possibility of carrying on intensive culture," and he suggested that possibly I did not know what the word *intensivny* meant.

"I prefer the country to the town," he added; "but under the old conditions it was very difficult to make a decent living. That was my reason for leaving and going to St. Petersburg."

I could not succeed in finding a single peasant in this district who was not in favour of the new

system. In one village I visited the *starost*, or head, of the commune—the commune as an administrative unit still remains even when communal holding of the land is done away with—and he spoke enthusiastically about the change. He produced a plan, showing how the land is now divided, entrusted to his care by the Government as head of the commune. He also showed me a plan of his own *hutor*, and explained that each peasant is given a chart of his property, free of charge, and a copy is kept in the Government archives.

When I returned to St. Petersburg I visited the Department of Agriculture to see the preliminary work being done for introducing the new system. The officials there were enthusiasts, inspired by the keenness and energy of the Minister, M. Krivoshin, and of his right hand, M. Rittich, men to whom Russia owes a great debt of gratitude. In the summer-time many of these men were busy in the country explaining the new system to the peasants and surveying the commune lands. If all, or some, of the peasants of a commune desire to make the change, a surveyor is sent by the Department to draw up a scheme of distribution of the land, and this has to be sanctioned by the peasants before it can be carried out. It may be possible to give each peasant his little estate in one parcel of land, or part of the land may be bad and part good, and,

in order to treat all alike, each must be given two plots. When the difficulties of dividing the land fairly have been overcome, and the scheme criticized at a meeting of the commune, and perhaps, in consequence, remodelled, the question of making grants to help defray the cost of moving cottages and improving the land has to be considered. And when the surveyor returns to St. Petersburg there is much to be discussed, and finally two plans of each holding have to be made, one to be given to the owner and another to be preserved by the Department.

The methods of agriculture employed in many parts of Russia are still those in use a thousand years ago. The central government and many of the *zemstovo*, or local government, authorities are alive to the fact that a new system of land tenure will not materially improve the position of the peasants unless they are taught how to cultivate their land by modern methods. The peasants of Russia are not to be turned into scientific farmers in a year or even in ten years, but in many places they are being given opportunities of learning the principles of modern agriculture. In the little town of Yamburg I found a school of agriculture had been started by the local authorities and was under the charge of a man who had made agriculture a life-study, and was engaged in manifold activities for placing his knowledge at the disposal

PEASANTS SAWING TIMBER.

of the peasantry. He had a number of agricultural machines and implements on view in the institute, which peasants could inspect. The co-operative principle sometimes flourishes in villages, and peasants of the district had united to buy machinery. There was an excellent laboratory in the institute, and while I was there I saw a peasant, who had been well educated in the capital, employed in analysing earth from his holding with a view to discovering the appropriate grain to sow in it. The Director was in the habit of making excursions to the villages of the district to give lectures on husbandry, and he had instructed a number of school teachers in its general principles, and they, in turn, were lecturing in their school-houses. It must not be thought that work of this kind is going on all over Russia. The Yamburg institute is exceptional, and the man at the head of it fired with more than ordinary enthusiasm; but the Department of Agriculture is doing all it can with the men and money at its disposal to help the peasants to help themselves by changing their archaic methods of tilling the soil.

People are to be met in England who express profound regret at the partial abolition of the Russian commune. They are, perhaps, hypnotized by the word, which suggests that the peasants of a village combined to till their common lands. Such cases of co-operation are rare, and in most villages

individualism is rampant. The break-up of the communes is actually a gain to the cause of freedom. A member of a commune could not disembarrass himself of his share of the land, even when he had settled in a town and had no inclination to go back to the land. He remained responsible for a payment of part of the taxes imposed on the commune. Under the new system a peasant may sell his holding. The freedom thus given him has disadvantages, just as religious freedom, and freedom of speech, and freedom of the press have disadvantages. There is bound, in the course of time, to be a tendency for lazy, drunken, or thriftless peasants, or unfortunate peasants, to sell their land and drift to the towns. This undoubtedly will be an evil, but a country which has adopted modern constitutional methods cannot persist in keeping the greater portion of the population in leading-strings, and in forcing them to remain on the land whether they are so minded or not. Against this evil must be weighed the benefits the new law confers on agriculture, and the concession it makes to the liberty of the individual. The rapidity with which the reform of the system of land tenure has been made is remarkable. In six years 65,000,000 acres have been surveyed, and have become the absolute property of individual peasants.

DMITRI.

## CHAPTER VI

### TALES DMITRI TOLD ME

### I

"THERE are some people in the next village who are not good," said Dmitri.

"Very likely," I said; "but I know one person in this village who is quite bad; he is lying under an apple tree at the present moment, and looks as if he were waiting for an apple to drop straight into his mouth."

"But I am not bad," returned Dmitri, sitting up, "and it is not kind of the Barin to say that I am, and he ought to know that I should not eat apples before the Feast of the Transfiguration. At any rate, we are orthodox in this village, and in the next village there are *pashkovtzi*; they are bad people, because they are not orthodox."

"Then I am bad, Dmitri, for I am not orthodox."

"That is entirely different," said Dmitri, "because you are English. If I were English I should believe in the English religion, but every

Russian ought to believe in the Russian religion," and he lay back on the grass lazily.

"And who are the bad *pashkovtzi*?" I asked.

Dmitri put his hands behind his golden head and laughed.

"They meet together in a room, kneel on their knees, and say prayers," he said, and his lithe body shook with merriment.

"But it is very good to kneel on your knees and say prayers," I argued.

"It would be better if they crossed themselves more," he said; "besides, they do not pray to the Mother of God or to the saints."

Then he sat up and his blue eyes were grave.

"It is very silly of them," he said, "for one cannot be too careful with the saints. They can be very nasty if they like. I will give your High-born Nobility an instance. Apostle Peter and Apostle John were once walking in the cornfields near Pskoff."

"Wasn't it near Kieff?" I asked.

"It was near Pskoff," said Dmitri dogmatically, "and the corn was nearly ripe. Apostle John said to Apostle Peter: 'I dislike the peasant to whom this corn belongs; he treats me very badly. The church here belongs to me, but he never buys even a kopeck dip to burn before my icon,' and he looked very cross.

"'I love the peasant very much,' said Apostle Peter, 'and I am glad his corn is doing so well; he puts a big taper before my icon every Saturday evening.'

"'Yes, and in my church,' said Apostle John, and he was very angry; 'it is not as if he could not afford a candle for me. I mean to pay him out. I shall send a great thunderstorm and spoil his corn,' and he went away in a very bad temper.

"So that night there was a terrible storm of thunder and lightning. A great rain fell and the corn was all spoiled.

"Next day Apostle Peter and Apostle John met again in the cornfield.

"'You see what I've done to your friend,' said Apostle John, pointing to the corn, 'and serve him right.'

"And Apostle Peter only laughed.

"'Ai, yi, yi, Apostle John,' he said, 'what a mess you've made of it. I stepped round, saw my friend, and told him what you were going to do, so he sold his corn to the priest of your church.'"

And Dmitri fell back on the grass, wriggling with laughter.

## II

"The twelve apostles were once walking in the fields near Kieff," began Dmitri, and the assurance

with which he made the statement forbade me to question it.

It is Dmitri's habit to be dogmatic, an unbecoming habit in a boy of eighteen. Although he looks as if he had stepped from the Bayeux tapestry, he reminds me, as I once told him, of Queen Elizabeth. That was when he scoffed at Nonconformists, and maintained that to be a good Russian one must belong to the Orthodox Church, established by law, while Germans ought to be Lutherans, and Poles Catholics.

"And what," I asked, "were the twelve apostles doing near Kieff?"

"That I cannot tell the Barin," said Dmitri; "all I know is, that they were walking about, and at sunset they were very tired, so one of them knocked at the door of a peasant's house to ask for a night's lodging.

"The peasant, who had gone to bed, was angry at being disturbed, and asked them roughly what they wanted.

"'We are the twelve apostles,' said Apostle Peter, 'and we want to come in and sleep.'

"'I and my family are sleeping on the stove,' said the peasant, 'but you can sleep on the floor, if you like.'

"It was really very kind of him; for, after all, twelve extra people in a room is not very pleasant. But the apostles were not pleased.

" ' Apostles,' they said, ' do not sleep on the floor, but always on the stove; therefore, you and your family must give place to us.'

" ' In that case you must help me in the fields to-morrow,' said the peasant.

" The apostles agreed, so the peasant led them into his house. They all bowed to the icon of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, lay down on the stove in a long row, and went to sleep.

" At four o'clock in the morning the peasant came and woke them up.

" ' Get up,' he said, ' and come and work.'

" But the apostles were very sleepy, so they all turned over and yawned, and went to sleep again.

" The peasant came back at five and woke them.

" ' We will get up soon,' they said; but they were so tired, and the stove was so nice and warm, that they turned over and went to sleep again.

" At six o'clock the peasant came back, and he was very angry when he found them all still asleep, so he took a stick and beat the one lying on the outside. Then he went away. The apostle on the outside was Apostle John, so he got up, climbed over the other eleven, and squeezed into the place next the wall, for he did not want to be beaten again.

" At seven o'clock the peasant returned, and they were still asleep. He was still more angry.

"'Get up, you lazy creatures,' he said; but they did not stir, so he seized his stick again. He was a just man, and felt it would be unfair to beat the same apostle a second time, when all the twelve were guilty, therefore he decided to beat the one nearest the wall. Of course that was Apostle John, so he was beaten twice. Feeling very sore, he sat up on the stove, crawled over four apostles, and got the fifth place from the wall. Then he went to sleep again.

"At eight o'clock they were still sleeping when the peasant came back. He was still more angry.

"'Here have I and my family been working since four,' he cried, 'and you, who promised to help me, are still asleep.'

"He remembered that he had beaten the apostle at the edge of the stove and the apostle next the wall, so he decided to beat one of the others, and it so happened that he chose the fifth from the wall, and poor Apostle John was beaten a third time. Then the peasant went away, and Apostle John climbed over the others and took the eighth place from the wall."

"Now, Dmitri, how much longer is this story?"

"The Barin has not heard half yet, because the peasant came twelve times, and every time Apostle John got a beating. It is a very long story."

" Well," I said, " supposing we get to the moral."

" I don't know what that is," said Dmitri, and he took a comb from the pocket of his sheepskin coat and passed it through the fringe of yellow hair which fell almost into his blue eyes.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE COURT

THE *Almanach de Gotha* states that Russia is a constitutional monarchy under an autocratic Tsar. It is true that Nicholas II. has summoned representatives of his people to aid him in the task of government, but he has sworn no oath to conserve the system he has introduced, and he might set it aside, should he, in his wisdom, consider such a course necessary for the welfare of his subjects. What he has given he can take back. It is exceedingly improbable that either the present Emperor or his successors will restore the old system of government. The peremptory dismissal of the first two Dumas is evidence of the power still wielded by the Sovereign, and it is unlikely that he will sanction any law passed by the legislative assemblies unless he considers it to be beneficial. Hence the ceremonies of the Russian Court are not pleasing anachronisms, but acts of homage to a Sovereign possessed of power.

"This is the substance," said an Englishman to

THE EMPEROR LEAVING THE GREAT PALACE AT TSARSKOE SELO.

me at a ceremony in the palace of Tsarskoe Selo; "in other courts one sees only the shadow."

In Russian theory the Emperor has a double part to play. He is autocrat and he is also father of his people. Peasant as well as aristocrat must have access to his palace, and persons of humble rank have a part in the ceremonies of the Court. The titles by which the Russian sovereigns are called show the dual nature of their functions. In official documents the Emperor is called Autocrat. In loyal addresses he is often called Idolized Monarch and Batushka Gosudar (Little Father Lord). His consort is called Matushka Gosudarinya Imperatritza (Little Mother Lady Empress).

Foreigners usually call the Emperor of Russia the Tsar, and the Empress the Tsaritza or Tsarina. The first two titles are not commonly employed in Russia, and the last is not to be found in the Russian dictionary. The word Tsar occurs in the national anthem, but it has a somewhat ecclesiastical flavour, and the title Imperator is invariably employed at Court. In ordinary conversation the Emperor is referred to as Gosudar and the Empress Gosudarinya, words which mean lord and lady, or sir and madam. If a Russian says he has seen the Gosudar, one understands that he has seen the Emperor; he will employ the same term in a business letter, and begin a note to his tailor with the words, "Gracious Gosudar."

The little Grand Duke Alexis is not spoken of as the Tsesarevitch, although he possesses that title, but called the Naslyednik, a title which is no more than the common word for heir.

With the exception of State balls, which have not been given of late years on account of the Court's absence from St. Petersburg, Court ceremonies are of a religious character. The persons attending them are stationed in various rooms of the palace, according to rank, and have the privilege of seeing the Imperial family and their attendants pass from the "inner apartments" to the chapel. In 1912 the Emperor and Empress visited Moscow after a long absence, and a great number of persons were invited to see the Imperial *vwihod*, or progress, through the palace. Nobles stood in one room, merchants in another, representatives of the city corporation, of the townsmen, of the peasantry, and of the market people, had all the place due to them. The progress of the Court was interrupted at each group to receive loyal addresses, the customary offerings of bread and salt and gifts of sacred icons. These addresses expressed joy in the presence of the Idolized Monarch, and that of the Metropolitan was couched in the flowery language of Byzantine flattery. The years of the Sovereign's absence, he said, had been like the time when the sun has set, when darkness comes and hearts grow

sad; after the darkness had come the dayspring, and sadness had disappeared in the bright beams of the sun. There was a curious mixture of reverence and familiarity in the addresses of the humbler people. They said that Moscow had mourned because the Little Father Lord had not visited her, that their hearts were filled with joy because at last he and the Little Mother Lady and their august children had come, and they prayed the Almighty to pour His blessing upon them. The townsmen, the lowest class of citizens, asked leave to give the little Grand Duke Alexis an icon of his patron saint, and told him that they hoped he would grow up to be a blessing to his parents. The Tsar tasted the bread and salt presented to him, did reverence to the icons brought him, and passed on with his Court to bow before the Tsar of Tsars.

In order to maintain the traditional relations between themselves and their subjects the Russian emperors assume the attitude of aloofness appropriate to godlike beings whose portraits are to be placed in peasants' houses side by side with those of the saints, and whose discarded uniforms are to be enshrined in glass cases and preserved in churches. They permit no accounts of their doings to be communicated to the public, except those prepared for the purpose in the ministry of the Court. The bare fact that the Emperor

and Empress will grace some ceremony or gathering may not be published in a newspaper without authority, and the vague statement that "exalted persons" are expected to be present is all that the editor of a newspaper can make without exposing himself to the risk of punishment. The same rule applies to all members of the Imperial family. The official reports supplied to the press are written in a dull and formal manner, and no attempt is made to give a picture of the scene described. Here is an example: "Her Imperial Majesty the Lady Empress Marie Feodorovna was graciously pleased to be present at the performance given in the Imperial Marinsky Theatre for the school children of St. Petersburg. During the *entr'acte* Her Majesty was pleased to proceed to the foyer, where she addressed gracious questions to the children assembled there." This bald account of what must have been a very charming and pretty scene was all that the Russian papers dared to print. The reiteration of the words "was pleased" in these reports is peculiarly irritating, and forces one to irreverent speculation as to what would have happened if, for example, their Majesties had not been pleased to get out of the train when they reached their destination. Besides interlarding their reports of the doings of members of the Imperial family with stereotyped phrases, the officials who write them employ

a special vocabulary. For instance, the ordinary word for arrived is *priyehal*; in the case of Imperial personages the word must on no account be used, and *pribwyl* must be employed in its place. A Russian review published a violent attack on a provincial governor, and one of the charges brought against him was that he caused accounts of the doings of himself and his wife to appear in the official newspaper couched in terms only applicable to members of the Imperial family. The conceited creatures had *pribwyl'd* somewhere, whereas they had only the right to say they had *priyehal'd*.

The advantages of giving the ministry of the Court a monopoly to report the doings of the Imperial family are as obvious as its disadvantages. Whatever the reception accorded to the Emperor when he appears in public may be, the accounts supplied to the papers always mention tumultuous cheering at appropriate intervals of the narrative. No doubt the Emperor is usually cheered, but, were he to be received in silence, it is certain that the ministry of the Court would correct the error and, with the simple means at its disposal, convey the impression of an idolized monarch and adoring people. Newspaper readers are usually credulous and disposed to believe what they see in print.

Reticence is the key-note of Imperial speeches. Nicholas II. neither discourses on art, farming and

theology, like the German Emperor, nor does he by word of mouth put forward the claim to reign by divine right. In this he is wise. Correct and colourless speeches excite no criticism, and lofty rights that are tacitly assumed are more likely to be acknowledged than those that are haughtily claimed. A collection of the Emperor's speeches was published by a revolutionist a few years ago, prefaced by a fervent exhortation to meditate on them in order to understand the mind of the Idolized Monarch better. The revolutionist had been clever enough to see that, although each speech might have been effective at the time it was pronounced, when gathered together they formed a volume of unparalleled banality. The police took the same view and confiscated the book.

Although the maintenance of the Imperial prestige requires the Emperor to place a check on his public utterances, to listen to extravagant protestations of devotion to his person, and to appear as the central figure in ceremonies and pageants, his tastes are plain and his informal intercourse with his subjects is distinguished by its frankness and simplicity. In the earlier part of his reign he used to stand to pray in the nave of one of the churches in the Kremlin along with peasants and workmen. When he went to Poltava in 1909 to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of Peter the Great's victory over the

Swedes, he refused to listen to the advice of the police, and strolled about chatting with peasants. His homes at Peterhof and Tsarskoe Selo are small country houses, and the splendid palaces in both places stand empty. On State occasions he usually appears in the workmanlike dark green uniform of a colonel of the Priobrajhensky (Transfiguration) regiment. At Court functions he looks as if he wished the fuss was ended and he could be free to go home and play with his children. That, at least, has been the impression he has given me when I have seen him taking part in one of these ceremonies.

The most interesting of those I had the advantage of witnessing was the Twelfth Day ceremony, known as the Blessing of the Waters. The Tsar's guests left St. Petersburg for Tsarskoe Selo—the name means Imperial village—at nine o'clock in the morning. Most of them were men, but there were two or three ladies who looked as if they had hardly relished getting up in the dark to dress for a Court function. Beyond the city the sun was shining and the snow sparkled like crystal. The run from the capital to Tsarskoe takes hardly three-quarters of an hour, and when the special train steamed into the Imperial station we saw from the windows a spectacle as pretty as a picture in a book of fairy-tales, a hundred carriages standing in the snow, with servants in

great scarlet coats, and capes with ruffles of white fur. We were quickly whirling through a plantation of trees, and up a steep hill to the white palace with apple-green roof that stands on its brow. This vast rococo structure was built by Elizabeth and Catharine II. It contains a number of magnificent rooms. The walls of one are covered with amber, another is lavishly ornamented with silver, there is a lapis-lazuli room, and a Chinese room in black and gold. Nobody lives in them now, and they smell of chemicals used to destroy moths. Once the scene of the vulgar frivolities of the Court of the great Catharine, their sumptuous discomfort is now only a subject of tourists' curiosity, or used to frame the fleeting glory of an Imperial procession.

Arrived at the palace, an heraldic creature, covered with gold lace embroidered with eagles and wearing a jaunty cap set off with a bunch of white and yellow ostrich feathers, took my coat, and I joined the mob in a hall which was neither very spacious nor very lofty. It was filled with a glittering crowd of men in gay uniforms. They moved about, greeting friends and chatting. Half an hour went quickly in watching the brilliant scene and commenting on the play of the chief actors.

Yes, that is Trepoff who has just come in and is talking to the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaivitch.

They say that he insisted on having the ceremony here this year; for, as of course you know, last year the cannon in the fortress were loaded and shot fell near His Majesty when the salute was fired at the end of the ceremony. Trepoff did not care to run the risk of letting them go to St. Petersburg again this year. Of course this place is much too small, but we've got to put up with it. Now, there, that's the old Princess Galitzin they're making way for; she only consented to remain Mistress of the Court on condition she could wear what clothes she liked. Stolypin looks well—talking to Mikhail Alexandrovitch just opposite—he's always an excellent appetite, otherwise he'd never stand the strain. Sh!—His Majesty.

Conversation ceased, the band played the national anthem, and the Emperor, conspicuous by reason of the plainness of his uniform, entered and inspected the guard of honour. He spoke to a few people and retired. The Grand Dukes and some of the more decorative persons disappeared, and the general company resumed conversation. A quarter of an hour passed and at eleven o'clock the Imperial *vwihod* began. The procession had passed from the inner apartments through the musty magnificence of Catharine's long series of Italian rooms and down the State staircase to the hall. The Emperor led his mother. According to Russian etiquette the mother of the heir apparent must

take the chief place in a ceremony, and until the birth of the Grand Duke Alexis the Empress Marie had the right to walk with her son in progresses of the Court. By the child's birth the reigning Empress acquired the right to be at her husband's side, but she set aside custom and yielded the place which is her due to her mother-in-law. The Dowager Empress has the figure of a girl, and although Queen Alexandra may surpass her in beauty, the two sisters have the same grace of manner. She bowed and smiled as she passed, and her smile is a smile to enslave. The Empress Alexandra followed with the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Michael. She wore a dress of royal blue, and the long train was borne by pages. On her head was a *kokoshnik* flaming with diamonds, from which fell a long white veil. She bowed gravely, almost shyly, and her face was unlit by a smile. The contrast between the two Empresses was remarkable. There was animation in the face of the elder, and she seemed to play her part with enjoyment; the younger looked sad and as though she would gladly escape the state surrounding her. The other members of the Imperial family followed. High officials of the Court and ladies-in-waiting walked behind them, two and two. The ladies in attendance on the Empresses wore crimson dresses embroidered with gold, and those attending the Grand Duchesses wore similar dresses of dark green. The Russian

Court dress is very graceful. The overdress has long hanging sleeves and a train, and on the head is worn a *kokoshnik*, or diadem, made of the same stuff as the dress, from which falls a long white veil.

At the wedding of a Grand Duchess an American remarked to me: "I guess the show would have been finer if the ladies of the chorus had been better selected."

It was very irreverent, but the justice of the opinion must be admitted. The ladies of the Russian Court are not distinguished by their beauty. Yet no women, except the Polish women, are more fascinating than Russians; they have charm, and that is more alluring and more dangerous than beauty.

As the Imperial procession was passing through the hall of the palace two or three maid-servants in print dresses appeared at the head of a little staircase to see it. Nobody told them to go away. It was very pleasing and characteristically Russian. In some old-fashioned Russian households the servants collect at the drawing-room door, when there is a party, to watch the gentry amusing themselves. The Imperial family, and the persons attending them, disappeared through the door of the chapel, a beautiful apartment with walls of gold and bright blue, and the rest of us had to wait until they had ended their devotions. The

eighteenth-century custom of employing negro servants survives at the Russian Court, and two negroes, in zouave dresses of crimson, scarlet, and gold, kept guard outside the chapel door. There was a subdued buzz of conversation in the hall, and the sound of singing came faintly from the chapel. An hour passed, the liturgy was ended, and the little congregation came out of the chapel. The procession returned through the palace to the inner apartments. When it had disappeared there was a rush for coats and hats, as the rest of the ceremony was to take place in the garden. The heraldic creatures had lost my fur cap. I insisted that it must be found. To go hatless into the open when the temperature is many degrees below zero is to risk getting a severe headache. It could not be found. The heraldic creatures looked helpless and shook their heads and the feathers on the top of them. Then, as by a miracle, somebody discovered a bulge in his shuba—and my cap, thrust between the fur and the outer covering. We hurried out of the palace. The gardens were deep in snow, and along the paths were stationed Cossacks in long tunics of flaming scarlet with naked silver scimitars in their hands. We went down to the shore of a little lake to wait for the benediction of the water.

An old general showed me the flagon in which the Emperor would receive the blessed water. It was of gold and ornamented with reliefs representing

the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, the turning of water into wine, and the adoration of the Magi. These three events are commemorated by the Church on Twelfth Day in East and West alike. In the West the festival has popularly become that of the Three Kings, guided by the star to Bethlehem, but a verse of the hymn sung at vespers of the Epiphany—

> "Lavacra puri gurgitis,
> Cœlestis Agnus attigit:
> Peccata, quæ non detulit
> Nos abluendo sustulit,"

shows that the Latin Church also commemorates the event accentuated more emphatically than the others in the Greek rite.

Presently a procession came over the snow through the scarlet lines of Cossacks to the shores of the frozen lake. There were priests in golden vestments with glittering mitres, deacons, and singers in red and yellow, the Tsar, the Grand Dukes, and their attendants. The Imperial ladies had not ventured into the cold. The clergy and the Emperor took their places on a little stage jutting out from the shore of the lake, and the rite of benediction began. The Emperor crossed himself and then remained motionless, a military figure wrapped in a grey overcoat, while prayers were chanted. The priest blessed the waters of the lake in commemoration of the baptism of Christ, and bent down to dip the flagon into a hole cut in

the ice. He presented the vessel to the Emperor, who dipped his fingers in the water and crossed himself with it. The roar of cannon celebrated the blessing of the waters and the choir sang a joyful anthem. The Emperor stood motionless until the salute had ended. I wondered whether he was thinking of the narrow escape from death he had had the year before.

The splendour of an Imperial procession is marred by the thought that it may be a dance of death. The grandfather of Nicholas II. was assassinated, his uncle and chief adviser was blown to pieces, and he has seen the man who crushed the revolution shot dead in an opera-house. A palace custom shows the apprehension that is felt. It is the practice to serve the meals of the Imperial family now in one room, now in another. A minister, invited to remain to luncheon at the palace after an audience with the Emperor, was surprised to find that it was served in the Empress's boudoir. "It will be in the bathroom next," remarked his daughter. Which room has been chosen for luncheon or dinner is only known a few minutes before the meal is ready. The custom was introduced many years ago after the dining-room in the Winter Palace was blown up a few moments before the Imperial family were ready to go in to dinner. It is considered advisable to continue the practice, but people about the Emperor and

Empress do not mention the reason for it, and always speak of it simply as "a custom of the Court."

People often ask what is the true character of the potentate who is obliged to posture before his people and move in the midst of melancholy pageantry. That he is a good father and faithful husband I have never found any Russian to deny. Perhaps if he were more devil-may-care he would be more popular. The queen in the French play who desired her son to become dissipated because the masses love a rakish prince, was probably working on a correct theory. How far Nicholas II. falls short of her ideal may be judged from the following story. The Emperor was congratulating a girl on her approaching marriage. "I can wish you nothing better," he said, "than that your married life may be as happy as mine."

When he returned from England after the marriage of the present King and Queen, somebody asked him what had impressed him most.

"The crowd outside Buckingham Palace waiting to see Queen Victoria drive out," he said; "there they waited, hour after hour, and at last a little black carriage came out of the palace gates. Very few of the people in the crowd could see the Queen, but they knew that she was there, and they went away satisfied. One day it will be like that in Russia."

I do not think the Emperor's prophecy is likely to be realized in his lifetime ; but a day will come when his subjects will forget the mistakes that have been made in his name and recognize that they owe to him great reforms.

RESTING ON THE STEPS OF ST. VASSILI'S CATHEDRAL IN THE RED PLACE AT MOSCOW.

# CHAPTER VIII

## THE REACTIONARIES

"ABOVE Moscow only the Kremlin, above the Kremlin only the heavens," is a Russian saying; and the Kremlin, with the palace of the Tsar, the cathedral where he is anointed and where he crowns himself, churches in which lie the bodies of bygone Tsars, monasteries where prayer is made that the dead may rest in peace and the living autocrat may have prosperity, is an embodiment of the ancient view of the will of Heaven for the Russian people.

In St. Petersburg the old theory of a nation bound together by the ties of a common faith, and obedient to the will of a stern, but loving father, may seem vain; in the Kremlin one begins to understand its splendour. For the place casts a spell on the stranger. I felt it one night as I yielded to the will of a vanished Tsar and uncovered to pass in by the Gate of the Saviour, as all men have uncovered since Alexis ordered that reverence should be paid to the picture of Christ high above the gateway. Within the battlements,

in a great shadowy church, a little crowd of men and women were praying. There was a haze of incense, candles shed a mellow light on faded pictures of saints, men pressed forward to kiss the icon of the Vladimir Mother of God, sparkling with diamonds, as did an Emperor fourteen hundred years ago, when it was brought from Jerusalem to Constantinople. The crystal voices of the chanters floated beneath the arches in the eternal appeal of the Russian Church: "Lord have mercy." Reform seemed sacrilege: the ancient ideal sublime.

Outside the Kremlin, on the Red Place, I bought an evening newspaper, called *The Dawn*, and stood to glance at the news in the cold, modern glare of arc-lamps. A Moscow editor had been fined three thousand roubles for publishing an article displeasing to the Governor; three men, condemned on hazardous evidence for plotting against the Tsar, were confined in one room, and their ankles were raw from heavy chains; an old acquaintance, who had sat in the first and second Dumas, Father Grelewsky, had been exiled. The spell of the Kremlin was broken. I remembered a morning when Grelewsky explained to me the scope of the Polish Education Bill, of which he had charge. He had the manner and air of a young Cambridge don, and he spoke of the paramount necessity of ridding Poland of Russian school teachers, who come as the enemies of the

language, the culture, and the religion of the country to which they are sent by the Russian Government. The remembrance of that conversation brought me face to face with a chief cause of the breakdown of the Russian theory of government. The old ideal was only attainable when the Tsars ruled men of one race and of one faith; it could not be imposed on the alien races which became subject to the Russian Crown as the borders of the Empire were enlarged. Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, Finns, Tatars, Armenians, and Georgians were not bound together and to the conquering race by the ties of a common faith, and while they might submit to be ruled by a Tsar, they could not think of him as father. But in Moscow, the third Rome, men were unable to understand this. They clung to their theory, and a thousand crimes were committed to save a beautiful ideal, already shattered in the blast of conquest. The method of defence has been invariable and is embodied in the word Russification. To force every subject of the Russian Tsar to speak the language he speaks, to believe the creed he believes, to pray the prayers he prays, is the aim of the reactionary. Many volumes might be filled with the sorrowful history of the efforts made to attain these ends. The story of the Russification of the Uniats of the western provinces in the last decades of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth

century makes one of the most hideous chapters of modern history. They were tortured, they were killed, they were exiled, in the interests of a foreign theory and an alien ideal. Soldiers bade them pray as the Tsar prayed, drove them into churches and forced open their mouths with their swords for orthodox priests to make them swallow the Sacrament. "Cossacks have converted them, let Cossacks teach them," said a Metropolitan of Moscow, aghast at the crimes the State was committing in the name of the Church, when the Government asked him to send missionaries to instruct the converts in the principles of the religion thrust on them. When Mother Mieczyslawska escaped from her torturers and told the story of the martyrdom of the Basilian nuns of Minsk, whose abbess she had been, the indignation all over Europe was comparable to that excited by the tale of the Putumayo atrocities. A similar persecution of the Uniats of the eastern part of the present Kingdom of Poland began in the seventies of last century, and was only ended in 1905. The attempt to make all subjects of the Tsar speak the language officially termed the dominant language, has been prosecuted with energy and determination. It is not yet ten years ago that the Lithuanians, a race which possesses men of scholarly attainments, were forbidden to possess any books in their mother-tongue, and that gospels and prayer-books were

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS CONVERTING POLES TO ORTHODOXY IN 1874.
(From a contemporary picture by V. Eliasz.)

surreptitiously sold them by Jewish pedlars who smuggled them across the frontier in their packs of combs and laces. At the present time the instruction in the schools provided by the Government in Poland is given exclusively in Russian, and a hundred Polish schools, which did not cost the State a penny, and did not compete with the limited number the Government has erected, were closed. It is thought better that children shall be unable to read and write than that they shall read and write their own language instead of the dominant language. There are not twenty Polish students in the crowded University of Warsaw, because Poles prefer to study abroad than to be forced to study in a foreign tongue when in the confines of their own country. At the present time Baron Ropp, Bishop of Wilna, is living in exile, because he refused to abet the Government in an attempt to force the Lithuanian peasantry of his diocese to pray in Russian instead of in Lithuanian. A Russian bishop has been placed at the head of the ancient church of Georgia, and the candidates for the ministry in the Georgian church are compelled to speak Russian instead of Georgian in the seminary provided for their training. It would seem that the hope of attaining to the ancient ideal has not been lost, and that in Moscow and St. Petersburg men fail to understand its impracticability.

There are not wanting amateurs to further the efforts of the Government. I used to go sometimes to a house in St. Petersburg which was a gathering-place for men and women imbued with the Russian idea. The people one met there were invariably agreeable and cultured, and the host had the charm of a man who has spent the years of a long life in fighting for an ideal. His efforts were directed to fight the Russian enemies of the Russian idea. With Poles and Georgians and Lithuanians he had no concern; there was work enough to do in combating the foes that had sprung up in the heart of Russia. But his weapons were rusty tools with which to go into battle against the reformers who promised happiness and plenty to the people, and the revolutionists who preached a new ideal. What availed it to distribute thousands of coloured pictures of the Empress hemming shirts for soldiers in Manchuria when the peasants and workmen they were intended for did not know why their kinsmen were fighting the Japanese, and did not care? Brochures about the Little Father Tsar and the dear Little Mother Empress would not be more appreciated by peasants clamouring for more land, than religious tracts by the wives of British workmen. One of the loyal pictures employed in the propaganda fascinated me by reason of the oleographic flagrancy with which it presented the ideal. It was designed

to celebrate the birth of an heir to the throne, an event which it was hoped would strengthen the loyalty of the masses. In the centre of the picture was the infant prince, and at either side the Tsar and Tsaritza, in crowns and yellow robes of state, bent over his cradle with adoring gaze. At the top of the picture were angels singing *Gloria in excelsis*, and at the bottom was a row of peasants holding palms and looking up at their future ruler with the rapture of the shepherds in pictures of the Nativity.

Many of the people I met at this house were members of a league called the Union of the Russian People. Numbers of nice Russian women joined it, just as numbers of nice English women become members of the Primrose League, and they occasionally enjoyed hearing a good speaker expound the views they were bound together to uphold. They also poured out tea, as I saw for myself when I went to a meeting at the head-quarters of the club in St. Petersburg, and, as one says, helped to make things go. And they purred with pleasure when the chairman said, "Make way for His Holiness; this way, if you please, Vladika," and the Archbishop of Moscow, a thin figure in black, with a diamond cross on his high white head-dress, and a rosary round his wrist, made his way through the crowd coming back from the refreshment-room to resume listening to

floods of patriotic eloquence. Such meetings served to sustain the fervour of the faithful; for propaganda the league had mass meetings and stirred up enthusiasm with the help of military bands and church choirs. I once went to one of these demonstrations in the Michael Riding School, a place about the size of the London Olympia. A great crowd was gathered round the platform, and those who did not care for political speeches walked about smoking cigarettes. One of the speakers impressed me greatly. The simplicity of his methods was refreshing. He had an enormous voice and shouted: "Down with the Japanese!" (Cheers.) "Down with the English!" (More cheers.) "Down with the French!" (Still more cheers.) "Down with the Germans!" (Frantic cheers.) "Russia must be saved" (Sustained cheers) "not merely for her own sake, but that the unhappy nations, sitting in the darkness of the West, may have the Truth brought them." This high sentiment was received with uproarious cheering, and the band played "God save the Tsar" while the orator was taking breath for a new flight. His next remarks were equally successful in securing for him the applause of the immense audience, and after the elapse of five minutes the band again played "God save the Tsar," a task it continued to perform at intervals of five to ten minutes, until the political harangues gave place to an elaborate

religious ceremony. Priests and deacons in golden vestments took possession of the platform, and a choir implored the mercy of Heaven in chants of melting loveliness. Denunciation and apostrophe had been not only the ornaments but also the substance of the speeches, and it is doubtful whether they would have been applauded had not the head of the police ordered the yardmen of the city to attend the meeting and act as a claque. The league appealed to sentiment and to prejudice, and was obviously no match for the insistent propagandists of constitutional or socialistic ideas who were going to the people with promises of future prosperity and universal happiness.

Conscious of the ineffectiveness of their methods, some of the leaders of the Union of the Russian People decided to follow the example of the Social Revolutionists and set to work to organize a fighting wing with the object of assassinating the more undesirable Liberals. Here a difficulty arose. Young men and women were always to be found ready to risk their lives in attempting to murder, or, as they say in revolutionary circles, to execute, highly placed officials; the young adherents of the reactionary party showed no disposition to put their lives in jeopardy. Hence, when it was resolved to assassinate Hirschenstein, a Jew and a Liberal member of the first Duma, hired ruffians had to be found to do the deed. The nice people

who had joined the Union were as dismayed at its adoption of terroristic methods as Primrose dames would be should they discover that certain members of the committee were planning the assassination of Mr. Lloyd George. Their detestation of violence has been cast in their teeth. It has been said that, while revolutionaries gave their lives for their cause, reactionaries refused to do so. The slur is unwarranted. They were bound together to defend throne and altar, and the religious principles most of them held debarred them from taking the bomb or the revolver. To charge them with cowardice is unjustifiable; they have, as a rule, refused to use violence against their opponents, but they have given ample proof of their willingness and their ability to risk their lives in the service of their sovereign. This is true of Conservatives as well as of reactionaries. Strictly speaking, a Russian reactionary is a man who regrets the reforms introduced by the Tsar, and desires to see the Parliament he has set up abolished, and the liberty of religion he has granted annulled. These persons are few in number and their views command little sympathy in the rank and file of the nation. There are, however, a large number of men who approve the present system of government, and, although they may desire reforms, are opposed to the introduction of wider liberties. Some of the most eminent of these men

are often dubbed reactionary by writers in the foreign press, whereas they are actually Conservatives. When they occupy prominent positions in the Government or in the army, they are spoken of in language that leads the reader to suppose that they are by nature hard and cruel. To meet them is to discover that they are not the villains of a melodrama, but differ in no way from the people to be met at a London dinner-party. Their wives and daughters are as tender and as sensitive as English women of the same class, and often better educated. The sacrifices to duty made by many Russian Conservatives are as worthy of admiration as the heroism of the revolutionists to whom they are a prey.

Under the rule of the late M. Stolypin so many persons were hanged that the hangman's rope was dubbed Stolypin's necktie. The policy he adopted—first order, then reform—may be thought mistaken, and the means he employed to restore the tranquillity of the country may be condemned; nevertheless, the courage and devotion to duty displayed by the late Premier command admiration. He was a fearless man, and when he became virtual Dictator refused to be encumbered with chafing safeguards. In the summer of 1906 he went to live in a wooden house, lying close to the road, on the pleasant Apothecary's Island in the outskirts of St. Petersburg. The story of the three revolu-

tionists who drove up to the house and wrecked it with a bomb, killing twenty persons, does not need to be repeated here. One episode of the tragedy may be recalled. I tell it as it was told me by Count Reutern, who was waiting to see the Premier when the bomb was thrown. Covered with blood and fragments of plaster he climbed through a window into the garden.

"At the same moment M. Stolypin, who had been thrown from his chair by the force of the explosion, came into the garden crying, 'What has happened to my family?' He was told that they were all safe, but this, alas! was not true. The words were hardly spoken when his daughter, a girl of fifteen, was carried into the garden with her feet half torn from her body. She was in too great agony to cry. Her three-year-old baby brother was only slightly wounded, but their nurse, who was with them, was severely injured and has died."

The man who refused to be daunted and calmly pursued his work after such an event was made of fine stuff. One heard that the injured girl lay in bed moaning from pain, but silenced herself whenever Mme Stolypin came into the room, "because it upset mother." It does not require great discernment to understand something of the mental suffering of the wife of a man in M. Stolypin's position. I once conceived the idea of writing a

tale of the wife of a common Cossack or policeman, sitting at home and wondering whether her husband would come back alive; but I did not execute the plan, for it was well known by all who had never been in Russia that all Cossacks and Russian policemen were fiends incarnate, and to enlist sympathy for them or their wives would have been considered criminal. Omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs, and Russia has to thank agitators and Japanese for the moderate reforms she has secured; yet an onlooker must recognize the fine qualities of the men and women on both sides of the Russian struggle.

Even a loiterer in St. Petersburg was perpetually being reminded of the danger to which agents of the Government were exposed, and the pluck they required to remain at their posts. One drove out to the Point on spring evenings to see the sunset, and, on the way, passed a house provided with a bomb protector. It was the house of Count Witte, and on the roof was erected a high iron railing to cut off approach from the roof of the next house. The Count had caused it to be erected after finding a bomb had been dropped down the chimney of his study. Or one was in a frivolous mood, and went up the river to hear French ladies sing vapid Parisian slang in the *café chantant* of Christovsky Garden. The little steamer passed the garden of the splendid palace

in which M. Stolypin lived after his wooden house had been blown up. Smooth lawns sloped down from the terrace to the water's edge, where they were bounded by lofty wire fencing, erected to keep out assassins. The grounds were lit up with arc-lamps, so that the sentries might see any intruder. And always a boat with policemen was passing slowly backwards and forwards before the gardens. Somebody would mention that, if the wire fencing were tampered with, electric bells would ring in the guard-room, and it was inevitable that the remark, "I wonder when they'll get him," would be made.

The light in the restaurant was exceedingly bad, and the explanation offered was that the manager had had it turned down to please a gentleman who thought itwould be safer: a high official was supping. A certain general was pointed out to me in another restaurant which was always filled with a gay crowd at luncheon-time. "The manager does not quite like his lunching here," said the friend who had called my attention to him; "you see, something might happen, and it would be bad for the place."

And sometimes something did happen. Stolypin was shot dead at the opera in the presence of the Emperor. The tale of the girl who made herself a living bomb, and shot dead the Director of the Prisons Department of the Ministry of the Interior,

will be told later. The view a Baptist minister took of that occurrence may be given here. I praised the girl's courage, and Pastor Fetler, minister of a Baptist chapel in St. Petersburg, deplored her wickedness. "His death was a blow to the Baptist cause," said the pastor; "he was a saved man, and he gave us permission to circulate Baptist tracts in all the prisons of the Empire." And I had never heard the man spoken of before except as a heartless scoundrel. Good hearts may beat beneath the Tsar's livery. Two nervous boys shot at General Ignatieff, the thorough-paced reactionary, as he has been labelled, and failed to hit him. They were arrested, tried, and condemned to be hanged. The General could not sleep for thinking of them, and made a strenuous effort to save their lives. "They had such kind eyes," he said.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE REVOLUTIONISTS

A LITTLE procession passed through a dingy corridor of the St. Petersburg Law Courts; first came a soldier with a drawn sword, then an old woman in a shabby dress of coarse black stuff, then ten soldiers. The old woman had not the air of a criminal. There was supreme dignity in her bearing, and her eyes shone, as though she saw a beautiful vision. Yet she knew that the judge before whom she was about to stand would send her to die in Siberia. I thought, as she passed me, that the women who went to meet death in the arena for love of Christ must have looked as she looked. Her name was Catharine Breshkovsky, but I had always heard her called Grannie; indeed, like thousands of others who had never seen her, I called her Grannie myself, and during the two years she had been awaiting trial in the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul had often asked friends how Grannie was. The following day I heard her sentenced to perpetual exile in Siberia, and I went to speak to her before she was removed from

"GRANNIE."

the court. She bent down from her place and kissed me on the forehead; I felt the kiss to be the benediction of a martyr.

If he that masters himself is greater than he that takes a city, and if self-sacrifice is the true measure of human greatness, then Catharine Breshkovsky's claim to be numbered among the great women of the world is incontestable. She held freedom to be divine, and the history of her consecration to the service of the divinity reads like a page of Christian hagiography. She was a daughter of a noble family, and she married a nobleman imbued with the same views as herself. Together they began to educate the peasants on their estate and to rouse in them the desire for reform. They were denounced to the Minister of the Interior as conspirators and placed under police surveillance. This was the turning-point in Catharine Breshkovsky's life. "I was at this time twenty-six years old," she wrote; "my husband, like me, had a whole life before him, and therefore I thought it only fair to speak frankly. I asked him if he were willing to suffer exile and death in the cause of freedom. He said that he was not. Then I left him."

Having made the great renunciation, she went forth to preach revolution to the peasants. "I went to Kieff, joined a revolutionary group, and travelled from town to town spreading our ideas.

I put on peasant dress to elude the police and to break down the peasants' cringing distrust. I dressed in bark shoes, coarse shirt, and heavy cloak. I used acid on my hands and face. I worked and ate with the peasants. I learnt their speech. I travelled on foot, forging passports. I lived 'illegally.'" After spending six years in this manner, Mme Breshkovsky was arrested. She was kept in prison for four years, and in 1878 was tried and condemned to exile in Siberia. The journey of five thousand miles was made in springless waggons. Sometimes the exiles were rattled along for a week, without halting for sleep. Some died on the journey.

After ten months at the Kara mines, Mme Breshkovsky was sent to Barguzin, a miserable hamlet near the Arctic Circle. Two years later she made a bold attempt to escape, and, accompanied by three students, walked and climbed some six hundred miles, hoping to get to the Pacific. The fugitives were caught, and Mme Breshkovsky was sentenced to four years' hard labour at Kara, a punishment made less intolerable than it would otherwise have been by the companionship of women who had been condemned for political offences. A few weeks after she arrived there, eight men escaped. "For this we were all punished. One morning the Cossack guards entered our cells, seized us, tore off our clothes, and dressed us in

convict suits alive with vermin. That scene cannot be described. One of us attempted suicide. Taken to an old prison, we were thrown into the 'black holes,' four little stalls off a low, grimy hall, which contained two big stoves and two little windows. Each of us had a stall six feet by five. On winter nights the stall doors were left open for heat, but in summer each was locked at night in her own black hole. For three months we did not use our bunks, but fought with candles and pails of scalding water, until at last the vermin were all killed. We had been put on the 'black-hole diet' of black bread and water. For three years we never breathed the outside air. We struggled constantly against the outrages inflicted on us. After one outrage we lay like a row of dead women for nine days without touching food, until certain promises were finally exacted from the warder. This hunger strike was used repeatedly. To thwart it we were often bound hand and foot, while Cossacks tried to force food down our throats."

When the sentence of penal servitude had been served, Mme Breshkovsky was sent to a Buriat hamlet on the Chinese frontier, where she remained for seven years. She lived in a wretched hut and managed to subsist on twenty-four shillings a month, the sum allowed her by the Government. Moneys received from friends in Russia she sent to

exiles in Kara. Mr. Kennan, an American traveller who visited her in this desolate spot, wrote of her as follows: "Her face bore traces of much suffering, and her thick, dark, wavy hair, cut short in prison at the mines, was streaked here and there with grey. But not hardship, nor exile, nor penal servitude had been able to break her brave, finely tempered spirit, or to shake her convictions of honour or duty. . . . There was not another educated woman within a hundred miles; she was separated for life from family and friends, and she had, it seemed to me, nothing to look forward to except a few years more or less of hardship and privation, and at last burial in a lonely graveyard beside the Selenga River. . . . The unshaken courage with which this unfortunate woman contemplated her dreary future, and the faith she manifested in the ultimate triumph of liberty in her native country, were as touching as they were heroic. Almost the last words she said to me were: 'Mr. Kennan, we may die in exile, and our children may die in exile, and our children's children may die in exile, but something must come of it at last.'"

This was the conviction that sustained her. Doubtless she longed to be once more in the fray, but I do not think it could ever have occurred to her that the years of exile and of loneliness were wasted. No cloistered nun had firmer grasp of the principle

that what a man is is more important than what he does. She acted on this conviction in 1910 when she was brought, as I have described, to be tried in her old age for persisting in the work which had cheated her of her youth. It is possible that had she denied the charge brought against her she would have been acquitted. She scorned such a course. When asked in court what her profession was, she replied: "I am a propagandist of socialism"; and when asked whether she was guilty, she rose and said, "I belong to the Social Revolutionary Party." To have stood in court, and to have pretended that she had given up the struggle, to have denied that she was the bondwoman of Freedom, would to her have been shameful. Thousands looked to her as a teacher and an example, thousands loved her and reverenced her; some of them were weak, beset with temptations, prone to leave the strait path and to return to the pleasures they had renounced, disposed to give up the struggle, and to feign acquiescence with the blasphemers of the divinity she worshipped; the sufferings of an old woman who had nearly reached the appointed limit of man's life would encourage the wavering, bring back the deserters, give fresh zeal to the fervent. Am I to be thought fantastic when I say that in my mind the name of Catharine Breshkovsky is associated with that of another of

the world's great women—Santa Teresa? What words sum up the life of the Russian revolutionist better than the Spanish nun's motto: "Aut pati aut mori"? Both of these women deliberately renounced all that to most of us makes life sweet; both worked fearlessly, and in spite of mockery and opposition, when the necessity arose; the influence of both lay in ability and willingness to suffer.

The first period of Catharine Breshkovsky's exile ended in 1896, and she resumed the work of propagating revolutionary ideas. Her message was a simple one. In her own words it was: "To reach freedom, first, the land must be owned by the people; second, the system of the Tsar must be swept away." She was in constant danger of being captured. Once the police came into the house in which she was living, and she put her shawl over her head, and stared at them with a vacant grin. She found it advisable to pose for a time as a Frenchwoman. In Kieff she found the police on her track, and eluded them by dressing as a fashionable woman, and leaving the town in an elegant carriage. On another occasion they came to search for her at a railway station; in a twinkling she had become a pious old woman, and she bowed and crossed herself before the great icon in the waiting-room with energetic devotion until the train she was awaiting arrived.

Then came the day when people said, "Have you heard? They've got Grannie."

And sometimes, as I watched the gay procession of carriages whirling past the palaces that face the Neva, I used to wonder what the brave old woman was doing in the fortress across the river. She lived there for two years in solitary confinement, while the police were leisurely collecting evidence against her. And after her trial she set out once more on the long journey to Siberia. It must be her consolation in exile to know that thousands find inspiration and strength in the thought of her suffering.

I did not understand what liberty is until I left England and lived in Russia, just as I did not realize that the English race is cultured until I lived in Germany. One does not think of the existence of the air until deprived of it.

The Englishman who sees Russian life for the first time is astonished at its freedom. If he be sufficiently youthful to despise convention, and sufficiently inexperienced to underestimate the value of maintaining a severe theory of manners, he is agreeably impressed. Unless he drifts into the cosmopolitan society of St. Petersburg, he finds that he is relieved from obeying many trifling rules and sumptuary laws which form part of the discipline of English life. He is not considered dirty because he has been too lazy to shave, nor ill

mannered if he be unpunctual, nor eccentric if he go into the stalls of a theatre in a check suit. He can talk more freely in general society and in the presence of young people than in England. The peccadilloes he concealed from all but kindred spirits when he was in England, he need make no further effort to hide. In Russia vice pays no homage of hypocrisy to virtue. In fashionable society the intrigues of prominent men and women are not merely whispered, but discussed, with as little concern as the weather. Russians know that Cupid is an unaccountable boy, who laughs at vows and holy rites, and it would seem to them as arbitrary to punish his victims as to ostracize people for having appendicitis. One can hardly say that there are scandals in a society that regularizes the irregular with the formula, "But they love each other." The Orthodox Church, in obedience to the State, makes concessions to public opinion, grants divorces to the rich and the influential with surprising facility, and offers no objection to the marriage of divorced persons. In Liberal circles men and women who form free unions, and, for one reason or another, do not go through a ceremony of marriage, are not looked at askance; on the contrary, an euphemism has been invented to describe their state. They are said to have contracted civil marriage, although Russian law knows nothing of such a form, and the cele-

bration and the dissolution of marriage are left exclusively to the churches. A woman with a large circle of revolutionary acquaintances told me that changes were so frequent that she found it impossible to keep count of the arrangement of the pairs. She was a pattern wife and mother herself, and said she thought this interchange of husbands and wives very unnecessary. It would, indeed, be wrong to infer from these facts that there are no virtuous people in Russia: there are many virtuous women. They are exceedingly tolerant, and hold, like the Duchess in Wilde's play, that all men are bad, without any exception whatsoever.

Your truly progressive young Englishman, thrown for the first time into this society, cannot but be gratified. He thought he was coming to a land of slaves, and he finds he is in a land of freedom: it is his own countrymen who are in the bondage of superstition and Mrs. Grundy. His gratification will increase when he discovers that children understand the psychology of modern love far better than the respectable residents of the London suburbs. Being somewhat old-fashioned I have occasionally been depressed by revelations of the precocity of Russian youth. There was Shura, for example. He was fourteen when I met him, strolling with the air of an experienced man of the world in the public gardens of a watering-place. The friend who introduced us was an actor, and

Shura took the opportunity to give a full account of a play he was about to write. The action took place in the Paris of Louis XIV., and all the characters were excessively immoral. The three of us supped together in a restaurant, and Shura laid down the law on politics, religion, and the problems of life with amazing assurance. He was not called upon to take any active part in politics, he told us, but when obliged to do so, he should certainly give his support to the Socialists. He further stated that he was a Lutheran, but had long since lost his faith.

"You see," he explained, "it is obviously absurd to believe in the existence of God."

I suggested that it was rash to describe a belief as absurd when it was supported by many perfectly intelligent persons.

"I cannot say that I have studied the question with any care," he said; "but I shall do so, and, in the course of a year, I shall be in a position to prove to you with perfect precision that there is no God.

"Life," he continued, "holds only three things worth troubling about: eating and drinking, sleeping, making love to pretty women."

"And what is your opinion of love?" I asked.

"In my opinion," he answered, weighing his words, "love cannot last long, not more than six months."

That was too much ; the actor and I went into fits of uncontrollable laughter. Shura showed a fine sense of courtesy by laughing too.

"When I am twenty-five I shall shoot myself," he remarked, when we had become sufficiently serious to warrant the statement.

"Why ?" I asked.

"Well," he answered, "what would life be after twenty-five ?"

Then he went away, for, as he mentioned, his father was annoyed if he stayed out later than two in the morning.

Then there was a seventeen-year-old who gave me a picture of the progressive boys and girls of the little town in which he lived. They went out in parties to the woods at night and stayed there until dawn, playing cards, eating and drinking, and making love. He thought that love-making was not good for his health, and blamed the girls for his downfall. I told him that English boys of seventeen were taught that such goings-on were sinful.

"Ah," he said, "in the eighteenth century, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that was also taught in Russia ; but not now, not now. Such things are trifles."

And they take themselves so seriously, these Russian children. A few little girls of Moscow arranged to meet once a week at each other's houses

to study political economy. Their deliberations were interrupted one afternoon by the entry of a servant with cakes and chocolates, provided by the mother of the small hostess, who, poor lady, failed to understand the soul of the modern child. There was great indignation. Tea and dry biscuits, stated the little girls, would have been gladly accepted, but it was nothing short of an insult to offer sweetmeats and fancy cakes to persons engaged in serious study. They decided to hold no future meeting in that house.

At the time when the Government was thought to be about to capitulate to the will of the People, a great procession of school children arrived at the office of the St. Petersburg *Rus*, a Liberal paper which has ceased to exist, and halted in the street while a deputation waited on the editor with a request to give publicity to their views on political and social reform. One of their minor demands was the substitution of free unions for marriage.

I know many Russian children who are as nice and as unprogressive as English children, but the young Englishman of my thoughts—he once told me that he could not determine which is the greater bar to human happiness, religion or the family—would certainly be encouraged at finding Russian boys and girls who accept as axiomatic the principles that sound so startling when enunciated at an English dinner-table. His cup

would overflow when he discovered that *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was being played night after night at one of the State theatres in St. Petersburg.

It could not be long, however, before he discovered the other side of the medal. The elementary safeguards of liberty are wanting. When I first went to Russia I used to hear people say that they desired to have a law like the English Habeas Corpus Act, and I remembered having thought it unreasonable that I was forced to learn the date of its enactment when I was a small boy. I soon began to understand that it was a very important date. An acquaintance of mine was arrested on a political charge and, as he continued to remain in prison for months and the authorities displayed no anxiety to have him tried, I called on the present Minister of the Interior to ask when he was to have an opportunity of clearing himself of a charge which was only vaguely formulated. The Minister did not know, and took the opportunity of pointing out to me that there is no law on the Russian statute-books to prevent the authorities keeping a person in prison without trial until the end of his days. The trial of the acquaintance I have referred to was delayed a year and a half, and he was then acquitted. Reformers demand that there should be a limit to the time which a person can be imprisoned without trial.

The Minister of the Interior has a simple expedient of placing the liberty of millions in jeopardy. He announces that a city or a province is placed under a mild form of martial law. By this facile process governors are given the right to banish whom they like by administrative order—that is, without trial. Thus a man living in Kieff may be ordered to leave in twenty-four hours and go to the Government of Archangel. It is useless for him to argue that he will be ruined, that his family will starve; he has to go, and he merely wastes time by asking the reason. Possibly Kieff is well rid of him; on the other hand, he may be the victim of an intriguing woman. Reformers desire that nobody should be punished without fair trial.

To be the editor of a Russian newspaper is a dangerous position, so dangerous that the official editor of a Liberal newspaper is very often a man of straw. He is free to print what he likes, but does so at his peril. An article which displeases the Governor appears and a fine must be paid. Sometimes the article disliked is specified, sometimes even that formality is not fulfilled. If the fine is not paid, the editor must go to prison for a period fixed by the Governor. In the provinces newspapers have been deliberately killed by a systematic process of fining. The editor of straw goes to prison when the fine cannot be paid, and

the real editor finds another nonentity willing to risk arrest for a small weekly wage. An odd case, which shows the arbitrary manner in which the press is punished, may be cited. The same article appeared in two newspapers, one in Revel and the other in Riga. The editor of one paper was fined, the editor of the other was not even criticized. Reformers demand freedom of the press.

They also ask for freedom of assembly. As it is, the members of a society or organization may obtain permission to hold a public meeting. A half-educated sergeant of police attends as censor. A speaker makes a statement which the sergeant considers should not be made, and the meeting is forthwith closed by the police. Reformers demand freedom of speech.

The career of a woman like Catharine Breshkovsky must be considered in the light of these facts. She fought to obtain the elements of freedom for her countrymen. The Social Revolutionary Party to which she belonged used such weapons as were at its disposal: the pen, the spoken word, the revolver, the bomb. There were some who went among the peasants to make them understand their own misery. There were girls who gave their beauty to the cause and consorted with common soldiers in the hope of shaking their loyalty and winning them to the People's side. Others worked abroad and prepared broadsheets

and revolutionary magazines to be smuggled into Russia and distributed. A fighting wing was formed, and many persons offered themselves to seize money belonging to the Government or to kill its representatives.

"A bomb has just gone off in the street," announced a frightened servant to me one morning.

"Has it?" I said, for I was down with influenza and bombs did not interest me.

The story of that bomb interested me very greatly a few days later, when I was in a better frame of mind. It had been thrown at a carriage conveying thirty thousand pounds to the Treasury. In the confusion that resulted a girl had driven off in a cab with the money, and men with revolvers had covered her flight. I heard more of that girl a few months later, when calling on a friend in Finland, a motherly woman who spoke five languages and let lodgings to Russian revolutionists.

"I ask no questions of my lodgers," said the motherly woman, "but I have been given to understand that that girl came here after she had placed the thirty thousand in safe hands. She would not stay, however, and returned to St. Petersburg. They begged her not to, but she was in such a state of spiritual exaltation that she heeded no one. She had more work to do, she said."

And in the course of conversation I mentioned that I held assassinating people to be wrong.

"What?" she said, and the energy with which she shot out the interrogation showed her amazement.

I repeated my statement.

She looked at me as if she thought I had taken leave of my senses.

"You think assassination wrong?" she repeated, speaking slowly. "I fail to understand you. Of course it is right. There is no other means of making Russia free."

There were not wanting casuists to defend that view. They argued that the People were at war with the Government and that therefore killing was no murder.

"It is very sad," remarked a prominent revolutionist to me, "that innocent persons are sometimes killed or injured when an attempt is made to remove one of the enemies of the People, but we must remember that in war innocent people, women and children, are bound to suffer."

Revolutionists did not assassinate, they executed; they did not rob, they expropriated. The revolution has indeed enriched the Russian language with an euphemism for robbery, and the most ordinary burglary is now termed an *expropriatzia.*

I did not attempt to argue with the motherly woman or with the casuists. Our points of view made argument waste of time. I believed in a

religion which teaches that the Ten Commandments have to be observed, and they did not: we had no common ground.

Dislike of the methods they employed does not prevent one from sympathizing with the aims the revolutionists set before them, or from admiring their heroism. A girl went to the office of an official and shot him dead. There was no possibility of her escape, and she made no resistance when seized by soldiers; she merely warned them that an explosion might result if she were roughly handled. They found she was swathed in dynamite, connected by a wire with a little electric battery in her pocket. It had been her intention to use herself as a living bomb had she not succeeded in shooting her victim. Who can but reverence her?

I find it hard to forgive the cold and mature men who used this girl and countless other young men and women as their instruments. What did the peasant boy who wrote the following letter know of politics? He was nineteen years old, and failed in an attempt to assassinate an officer.

"Hail, papa! How are you living? How is your health? Up to this minute I have been living and well, but no more, for in an hour I shall no longer be here, in this world. Then, papa, I pray you not to grieve, but remember me in your

prayers, which you are able to offer so well to the Lord. Papa, this evening I lay down to sleep, and did not think that the last hour is coming, that death is awaiting me. But at nine o'clock suddenly they call, whither—I do not know. They took me to the office where they receive prisoners. Then a priest came to me and asked whether I wished to receive him. I, of course, expressed full agreement and received him with a pure heart. And then, when I had made my confession and communicated, receiving the Holy Mysteries of Christ, I begged them to allow me to write you a letter, which I am doing at the present minute—that is, before death itself. Alas, papa, seven months I have lived, and suddenly this comes. They are going to hang me. Well, it does not matter; the Lord said that he that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword, as is happening. In twenty minutes I go to death by hanging; already no one here can save me, neither friend nor doctor; and I do not wish to be saved, for I have seen the sorrows of men enough, and the best way from getting away from seeing them is to give oneself up into the hands of the authorities. Well, father, good-bye, good-bye for ever! I shall not write you any more letters, and shall no more see your dear smile. Papa, I beg you to have a dirge said for my sinful soul, if it be only one. And also give my last farewells to all relations and

friends. From my mother—although she is not my own mother—I beg very, very great pardon, because I have often said that I perished through her, but that is not true; I perished by—by my own folly. Pardon! Write me a letter in the other world. I never . . . They are waiting.—Your son, now dead,

"MIKHAIL PETROFF OUSOFF.

"KHARKOFF, *May* 29, 1908, 12 *o'clock at night*."

The boy who wrote this letter was a victim of the terrorists. The lives of thousands have been ruined in the same manner. Young people, stirred by youthful desire to consecrate their lives to the good of mankind, became revolutionists at the height of the struggle with the Government, just as in England young people become monks and nuns or missionaries or dwellers in slum settlements or hospital nurses or officers of boy scouts.

I used to go sometimes to take evening tea with a girl who was studying medicine in St. Petersburg. She was a member of a good Jewish family and had been brought up as carefully as any English girl; indeed, she seemed to find it difficult to assimilate some of the ideas of the revolutionary friends she made in the capital. Once I asked her to come to tea with me. Now, she had been taught that it is unseemly for a young girl to go alone to a

bachelor's rooms, and although in theory she held such teaching to be wrong, she could not entirely rid herself of its influence. She accepted my invitation, I think, on principle, to show that she despised the old rules governing the intercourse of men and women. So she came, as an act of faith in the social creed she had accepted together with political and religious ideas of a revolutionary kind, and she sat talking for half an hour, a little stiffly, a little embarrassed, until tension was relieved by the arrival of some acquaintances. Sometimes a dozen friends would come to the rooms she shared with two other girl students, and the atmosphere was always charged with enthusiasm. One day I was told that she had been arrested and was in the Fortress. The matter was not to be spoken of, as her family desired to conceal it as far as possible. She had, it seemed, undertaken the difficult and dangerous work of propagating revolutionary principles among the soldiers. After she had been many months in solitary confinement, her family managed to secure her release on bail, and got her out of the country with a false passport as soon as possible. She can never return to her home in Russia, and must end her days in exile.

The tale of the student girl is commonplace enough, and thousands of other young people have given their families the anxiety and the sorrow

she brought to hers. I was forcibly reminded of that fact when the first Imperial Duma was opened. On the first two days it sat hundreds of people stood outside the Tauride Palace waiting to hear that the Tsar had sent a message to inform Parliament that he had pardoned political exiles. Hour after hour the crowd remained anxious and expectant, hoping to hear the glad news that dear ones were to be restored to them. But the Tsar was silent; hope vanished, and women went home to shed tears.

A student once did me a service and I invited him to sup in a restaurant. He was a boy of about twenty-three, and his eyes danced with delight when we found ourselves established at a little table.

"It is years since I have been in a place like this," he said.

He saw me looking at the wedding ring he wore.

"It gives one a solid look, doesn't it?" he said, and mentioned that his wife was in prison.

I expressed sympathy.

"Thank you," he said, "I cannot say that I am deeply affected. She is fair and I prefer dark women. Our marriage was purely one of convenience. You see, she was arrested in a house where the police discovered a number of bombs and, as she was an important member of the Party, we set about trying to free her. We offered the head of

police four hundred roubles to contrive her escape. He said he was sorry not to be able to oblige us, but that it was utterly impossible for him to do what we asked. The only plan, he said, was for one of us to marry her in prison. He would arrange that the priest should antedate the marriage certificate so that when the girl came up for trial her identity would be lost, and the authorities would imagine that they had made a mistake and arrested the wrong person. He promised to arrange the affair for four hundred roubles, including the expense of bribing the priest and deacon. One of us had to marry her, and I sacrificed myself to the interests of the Party."

"But you will join her when she is free?" I asked.

"I hardly think so," he said; "of course I do not attribute any importance to the ceremony."

The unwilling husband's face was delicately cut and his hands were beautiful. He was exceedingly shabby and had a perfect manner. The wine warmed him to talk, and he told me a good deal about himself. He had heard nothing of his parents for four years. His father was a nobleman possessed of considerable wealth and had disowned him when he threw in his lot with revolutionists.

"Sometimes," he said, "I wonder whether I have made a mistake; life might have been so different."

And the ruin of young lives was not the only evil resulting from the activity of the experienced men who directed the revolution. To fight its mobile enemy the Government employed spies and creatures who organized plots in order to betray the plotters. One had to be prudent in agreeing or disagreeing with the opinions expressed by strangers. Often I have wondered when a man has talked blatant revolution to me whether he were not a spy who, for one reason or another, desired to lead me into committing myself to the views he himself advanced. Revolutionists might seize money and assassinate officials from the loftiest motives, but they could not prevent the burglar and the ruffian from copying their methods. Revolutionary terrorism was followed by terrorism dictated by self-interest. It was not always easy to tell whether some wild deed was the work of revolutionists or of common criminals. Sober people, who had not been without sympathy for the political terrorist, were dismayed at the increase of crimes of violence. M. Stolypin, the late Premier, adopted stern measures to restore order. The prisons were filled with criminals, created in a large measure by high-minded revolutionists. The horrors of anarchy were followed by the horrors of repression. A letter from M. Lomtatidze, a member of the second Duma, written in the spring of 1909, when he was im-

prisoned in Sevastopol, shows what these horrors were.

"Many executions take place here," he wrote. "During the time I have been here—that is, from the end of last May—more than seventy persons have been executed. At the present time there are fifteen persons in the prison awaiting execution. . . . And because by far the greater number of them are robbers, hooligans, and such like, so they die faint-heartedly, swoon, fall on their knees before the hangman. They call on their mothers for help; in a word, they contribute greatly to the pleasure of the authorities. Executions take place in the courtyard of the hospital, and they begin to build the scaffold under a young pear tree, about fifteen feet from my window, at six o'clock in the evening. From that time—from six o'clock—until morning I am obliged to stay up—fancy sleeping?—and to live through all this. . . . Those condemned to death wait several months for the execution of the sentence. Each night they expect to be taken out, so they do not lie down to sleep until morning comes; only when it is morning, wearied out and broken with the strain, they sink down like dead and sleep all day. Then the least sound in the corridor, the steps of a jailer, the jingling of keys, makes them jump up and shriek in unhuman voices, heard

throughout the prison, 'Help! They want to hang me. Help!' The prison wakes; there is noise, shrieks, bangs on doors. Somewhere in a cell they begin to sing the Funeral March, somewhere they begin to cry, 'Farewell.'

"But it turns out they will hang nobody to-day, it only seemed to the prisoners that they would. Yet it is impossible to sleep. The authorities open the cells and begin to restore order. Beatings begin; then, to prevent shrieking, they gag them; they curse with rich oaths; they take away bed, soap, sugar, tobacco.

"Then the execution must take place in reality. That is already known from the evening, for it is seen from the number of coffins brought in how many people will be executed at night. Afterwards the police come and stop in the corridors of the prison and in the courtyard. Somewhere is heard the smothered sound of struggle, a sort of cry, and it is evident that they have not yet succeeded in fastening up the mouth of the man who has to die as it has to be done. They open the cell of the condemned, and several men fall on him; one has a pillow to shut his mouth with. But the criminal is ready; he will not give himself up without a struggle, only he has nothing at his disposal and cannot long resist. There is no shriek; one hears a hoarse moaning, one hears a hoarse rattle. The knocking of a hammer begins, they

are unfettering the criminal; but to make up for this, they fasten his hands behind his back, so tightly that even blood is drawn; they bind his legs, and beat him without cessation. Guaranteed not to shriek, they carry him to a cell, a dark room, and throw him on the floor, where he lies until the scaffold is ready and the Governor and other authorities arrive. During this time the scaffold is being erected in front of my window. Jailers bring posts and other appurtenances. From the corridor of the hospital is brought a cupboard, which serves as a platform for the man to be hanged. On the cupboard they put a little stool, and on that the criminal; afterwards the stool is taken from beneath his feet, and the hanged man begins to rock about above the cupboard. In the daytime that cupboard is used for us; you see it has a double use. The executioner (they say he is a policeman of the third division) takes a rest in the chemist's shop, the room next to mine. The coffins are brought in and put near the scaffold. Ready! The condemned are carried in like logs. They are dressed in shirts and drawers; they are barefoot, and trembling from the cold. First they put them on the ground; then with caution they unbind them, freeing their legs from the ropes; then they stand them on their feet. Usually they cannot stand, and it is necessary to hold them up in order that they should not fall. They also

ungag them, and, if they try to speak, stifle them with their hands. They drag them to the little machine, as one of the officials describes it, and then only the procurator appears at the scaffold and reads the sentence.

"At this time there is a noise in the prison, the Funeral March is sung, soldiers run about giving orders to be silent. All this, as is to be expected, raises up in the criminal the desire to live at all costs. He falls on his knees, weeps, prays, tries to kiss people's hands. The procurator, the doctor, the parson, turn aside, go away; the prison underlings say, but not too loudly, 'Ah! he doesn't want it, he doesn't want it.' The executioner comes and puts his hands on his shoulder; he falls on his face. The jailers rush forward and lift him up. He begins to kick, to howl, and to howl. Oh! I have never heard anything like it. I do not know what howls like that; there is nothing human in it, and yet nothing of the beast. I have seen how oxen and pigs and sheep are killed; they bellow, but this is something different. A few more times they kick him; they drag him up with great trouble; they struggle a little with him. And then something is hanging by the rope, something is stretched out. And the other condemned see; they are standing there, and they repeat the same scene."

No words can be strong enough to condemn such

barbarities as M. Lomtatidze describes, but the Russian Government cannot be condemned for using severe measures to restore order in the country. Few of the hundreds of young men who found themselves in the grip of Stolypin's necktie would have even seen the inside of a prison, had not the idealists and the hard-headed men of the revolution popularized crime by using it to attain ends which in themselves were excellent. They did evil that good might come, and suffering and misery followed.

The Russian revolution produced men and women whom I revere as I revere the saints; but the creed of the saints is mine, and reverence for the martyrs of freedom still leaves me free to abhor principles that they advanced.

# CHAPTER X

## PRISON LIFE

An elderly woman was enthroned on the platform in the great room of the St. Petersburg Women's Club. Her white hair, her fine profile, and the great dignity of her bearing, gave her the air of a great lady of the eighteenth century, and made it seem inappropriate that she should be giving a sympathetic account of English suffragettes. She gave an exhaustive history of the earlier efforts to secure women's rights, and when she came to what she called the revolutionary period, she touched in a clever and not over-coloured picture of the life of suffragettes in prison.

"Perhaps I should explain," she said, looking up from her manuscript, "that hitherto it has not been common for men and women of education to be confined in English prisons."

The Russian men and women of education to whom the explanation was offered were exceedingly amused at the remark, and they laughed. They formed the cream of the Liberal Party in St. Petersburg; many of them had been in prison, all of

CHURCH IN THE FORTRESS PRISON OF SCHLUSSELBURG.

them had friends who were, or who had been, in prison, and the irony underlying the speaker's statement was seized at once. Were I myself to write out the names of the persons I met in Russia who have been, or who are, in prison, the list would be a long one.

A prominent member of the Social Revolutionary Party told a friend of mine that he would rather be imprisoned ten years in Russia than one year in England. He spoke with authority, for he had been imprisoned in both countries. Without the advantage of his experience, I do not find it difficult to appreciate his point of view. English prisons may be clean and sanitary, but discipline is iron, and the prisoner knows that nothing will happen to change the horrid monotony of his life. A prison on the English model was set up in Finland a few years ago and one of the chief Liberal papers in St. Petersburg published an article complaining of the viciousness of the new system. The prisoners were to be forced to get up at a fixed time, and their beds were to be locked against the walls of the cells, so that the poor fellows would be unable to lie down during the day. A picture of the chapel, so arranged that the prisoners could see the officiating clergyman but not one another, was reproduced to show the refined cruelty of the arrangements. In a Russian prison discipline is laxer than in England, and varies in different

prisons. You may be tortured, on the other hand you may be allowed to smoke cigarettes. I was once given a letter from a prisoner, which an acquaintance thought it would be useful to publish in England in order to afford a glimpse of the horrors of Russian prison life. One of the chief complaints of the writer was that he was not allowed to smoke, and that his books had been taken away. You may be kept in solitary confinement, or you may be obliged to share a room with a number of other persons. The society forced on you may be that of pickpockets or of educated persons. The wife of a Member of Parliament told me that she became a Socialist in prison. When she was a young girl she had been arrested on a vague charge of propagating improper political views among peasants, and in prison she met a number of agreeable revolutionists who taught her the principles of socialism, of which she had known nothing. With a change of jailers or the arrival of a new governor, the severity of discipline may be increased or mitigated. There may be the excitement of a hunger strike, and no surgeons will be introduced to cope with it by scientific means. In many prisons there is reasonable chance of catching typhoid fever and being removed to the hospital. If you are in solitary confinement you will quickly learn the method of communicating with fellow-prisoners by a

system of tapping on the walls. If you are living in an overcrowded room you may manage to manufacture a pack of playing cards and enjoy surreptitious games of vint. You may be able to prosecute your studies with the help of books from the library. You will probably be able to receive your relations once a week. If you have money you may be allowed to supplement prison fare by buying butter, sausage, ham, and other dainties. Perhaps your relations will be allowed to send you food. People were greatly annoyed one Easter in St. Petersburg when they were forbidden to send the customary Easter cakes to their friends in prison. You may join a church choir in prison. You may get married in prison. You may earn wages in prison. You may be kept in a black hole. You may escape from prison. In view of these manifold possibilities it is not difficult to understand why the prominent Social Revolutionist preferred life in a Russian prison to life in an English prison.

In the summer of 1908 I saw the inside of a Russian prison. M. Mouromtseff, the President of the first Duma, and eleven other members of that ill-fated assembly, were shut up in the Kretchetnikovsky prison in Moscow for having signed the Viborg Manifesto, which called upon the nation to refuse either to pay taxes or to serve in the army. The imprisonment of the speaker of

a Parliament representing 130,000,000 people is a notable event, and many persons in England desired to know how M. Mouromtseff fared. I therefore asked M. Kourloff, the Director of the Prisons Department of the Ministry of the Interior, to allow me to visit him. I found him to be as agreeable and polished a man as the other high Russian officials I had met, and, greatly to my surprise, he fell in with my suggestion, and promised to give me a letter for the Governor of Moscow, requesting that I might be taken to see M. Mouromtseff. A couple of hours later the letter, in an enormous envelope closed with an official seal, was brought to my rooms, and, bearing with me this talisman, I hurried to Moscow by the midnight train.

The servants of the Governor looked at me suspiciously when I presented myself at his house, and appeared to have a desire to search me for bombs; but after some parleying I was admitted and shown to his study. He was also a polite and polished person, but he could not conceal his annoyance at the contents of M. Kourloff's letter. The request, he said, was of a very unusual nature; he could not, however, refuse to comply with the wish of the Director of the Prisons Department, and he would arrange that the Inspector of Prisons for the Government of Moscow should accompany me to the Kretchetnikovsky prison. On one

condition he insisted; I was not to speak to M. Mouromtseff nor to any of the other members of the Duma imprisoned there. Argument was vain; the Governor was adamant and I had to agree to the condition he imposed. The following afternoon Colonel Uferoff, the Inspector, took me—to be more precise, I took him—to the prison in one of Moscow's most elegant cabs, a little victoria with pneumatic tyres, an enormously fat coachman, and a horse which went like the wind. His Excellency was an agreeable man of forty, and was dressed in uniform. He told me that the most disagreeable thing in the world is to drive in an open carriage surrounded by a guard of cavalry, because the soldiers afford no protection from persons who may desire to shoot or throw bombs from the windows of the houses. We were received by the Governor and six officials at the prison gates. They had all been officers in the army and wore uniform. And the seven attended our progress through the prison. Before going to the political department we went over the part of the prison in which ordinary criminals are lodged. Most of them, I was told, were being punished for petty crimes, and dangerous criminals, "who had to be kept in chains," were confined in another prison. The miscreants were at work. In one room they were printing and binding calendars with pious pictures of the saints. In other rooms carpentering, shoemaking, tailoring,

and weaving were being done. The prison had received an order for school furniture and I saw several men engaged on it. The clothes worn in the prison are made by prisoners, and so is the whitish stuff for them. The Inspector laughingly told me I could order a suit in the tailoring department and guaranteed to give me satisfaction. The boast was probably warranted, for I noticed a smart-looking coat displayed on a dummy in the tailors' shop. In every room we entered the Inspector greeted the prisoners with the words: "Your health, brothers." They replied in military fashion: "We wish your Excellency health." One man came up to us and complained that he had not been paid his wages. It was explained to me that the prisoners are paid for their work, and can sometimes earn fivepence in a day. The system seemed an excellent one, for in this way many poor fellows leave with a small sum in their possession, which may be sufficient for their needs while they are seeking work. In some provincial towns prisoners are even allowed to work for private individuals outside the prison. In Pskoff I once saw a man, who had been hired out in this way, trundling a wheelbarrow down one of the chief streets, and the spectacle excited no comment. The cooking in the Moscow prison was done by prisoners. I tasted soup they were boiling in great copper cauldrons and found it

good, and when I left the prison the officials begged me to accept a little present of prison-baked bread, which proved to be excellent. The rooms in which the prisoners were confined, when they were not working, had each accommodation for some twenty persons. One entered by a gate of iron bars, so made that the jailers might see what was being done in each room as they passed down the corridors. Opposite was a window, and beds, set close together, were turned up on their hinges and locked against the walls to right and to left. There was no other furniture. The prisoners looked pale from confinement, but they did not look more unhappy than was to be expected of persons in their position.

The inspection of this part of the prison was a prelude to the business which had brought me to Moscow. The imprisonment of the President of the first Russian Parliament is a matter of permanent interest. For that reason, and because no other man, Russian or foreigner, was given the opportunity M. Kourloff gave me, I shall describe what I saw as I did at the time in the columns of the *Daily News*. My visit to the prison was made on July 10, 1908, and after the lapse of more than four years I do not care to trust to my memory for fresh details.

We passed from the criminal department into a courtyard and my attention was called to an

enormous red brick building, the entire frontage of which was pierced with small semicircular windows furnished with bars. It is used exclusively for prisoners sentenced to solitary confinement, and thirteen of the cells were occupied by members of the first Duma.

"You are now in a place which nobody but the prisoners themselves or the prison officials is ever allowed to enter," said the Inspector, when we were within the walls of the gloomy structure.

A broad corridor, floored with iron, ran the entire length of the place, and on either side was a row of doors, with a number above each. An iron staircase led to iron galleries, on which the cells of the upper storeys opened. At the top of this staircase half a dozen political prisoners, mere lads, were awaiting the order to descend to take exercise in the courtyard.

This, then, was the home the Russian Government had provided for the President of the first Duma.

"Open No. 83," ordered the Inspector.

A turnkey unlocked the door, and we entered a room about ten feet long by six. It was the shrine to which I had made pilgrimage—Mouromtseff's cell.

The prisoner was not there, but taking exercise in the courtyard, where I afterwards saw him. High in the narrow wall opposite the door was a semicircular window, through which could be seen

a glimpse of blue sky. The day was cool, and the air and light in the cell were pleasant, but in hot weather the glare and heat must be very trying. Beneath the window was set a little table of unvarnished deal, on which were three books—a Russian Bible and two legal works in German. In front of it stood a wooden stool without a back. On the high sill of the window were several paper packets, evidently containing such food as the prisoner is allowed to buy from the prison shop. The bed was an iron frame, fixed with hinges to the wall at the left. The rude mattress was covered with coarse sacking, and on it was spread a rug of the texture of horsecloth. There were no sheets. In Prince Ourousoff's cell (the Prince was imprisoned for the same reason as M. Mouromtseff), which we afterwards visited, the bed was folded up and locked to the wall. The Inspector informed me that M. Mouromtseff was allowed to lie down during the day on account of his age. Inside the door to the right was a stool, like an inverted box, about two feet high, on which a tin basin was placed for washing. The only other furniture in the room, save for a single peg, was a hanging shelf near the window, on which were a towel, a piece of soap, and a few other articles.

"An historical room," said the Inspector, gaily enough, but with perfect truth, as we left it and went to look at Prince Ourousoff's cell, arranged

in exactly the same way, with the difference already noted.

We descended to a courtyard, in the centre of which was a rather dismal bed of flowers. On the way the Inspector cautioned me that I was on no account to speak to the prisoners. They were not in the courtyard, as we had expected; but the Governor led the way to a little enclosure surrounded by a high wooden palisade, opened the gate to allow me to look in, and I saw the President of the first Russian Parliament—a prisoner. His face, white as marble, was very grave. He turned for a moment and looked at the little group of officers standing behind me, then he walked very slowly towards the other twelve deputies, who were a little in advance. Prince Peter Dolgoroukoff and one or two of the others looked back at us, evidently wondering what was the meaning of the unexpected visit. I longed to go forward and to give the former President my hand, to tell him that I had not come there from idle curiosity, but because my fellow-countrymen wanted to know how he fared. As far as I was able to judge, M. Mouromtseff and the other deputies appeared to be in their ordinary health. The dignity of the President, impressive in the Duma, was even more striking in the prison-yard.

It was almost a relief when the Inspector told me that we must come away. The gate was closed,

and we left the prisoners to walk undisturbed round the pathway which surrounded a little plot of high grass—a patch of emerald in a dreary setting.

"You have seen," said Colonel Uferoff, as we drove away, "the most extraordinary sight in Russia—Mouromtseff in prison."

From his daughter, Mme Adam de Wieniawski, whom I visited the following day at her father's beautiful country house at Tsaritzin, near Moscow, I learnt many details of M. Mouromtseff's prison life.

"My father rises every morning at six," she said; "one of the common prisoners comes to do the rough work in his cell, and he afterwards sweeps it out himself. Hot water is brought for him to make tea; and when he has breakfasted he settles down to work. He is only allowed three books at a time, and those sent him have to be examined by the prison authorities. This examination is sometimes delayed, and once he was kept for a week without new books, which was very trying for him, as he has no other distractions. He is working for his next course of lectures on Roman law at the University of Moscow. As you know, he is a barrister as well as a professor of the University, and he has been allowed to give his clients advice by letter about cases which he had undertaken before he went to prison; of course

such letters must be examined by the authorities before they leave the prison. At midday he has dinner, consisting of soup, in which there is a little meat, and *kasha*, or buckwheat. In St. Petersburg the imprisoned deputies can arrange to get almost anything they like from the prison shop; but in Moscow the choice is very limited. My father buys a little cold meat, butter, and cheese. He is only allowed to purchase these once a week, and when the weather is hot it is impossible to keep them long. I know these details from others, and not from him, as he does not complain. At nine o'clock he goes to bed. The sacking on the bed is not too clean, for it is only changed once a month, and the deputies therefore sleep in their clothes. They are not allowed to have a change of clothes in their cells, but must hand over one set to the authorities before receiving another. When I and my mother go to see him we are separated by a double grille."

I asked if it were true that the deputies had been disturbed by the cries of prisoners who were under sentence of death, having read this in one of the papers, together with the statement that Prince Ourousoff had been unable to sleep after hearing a conversation through his open window between two unhappy lads who were to be executed.

"I believe that this was at first the case,"

said Mme de Wieniawski, "but is no longer so."

She added that the deputies might have obtained various privileges if they had applied for them, but that they did not wish to ask any favours.

When the above account was printed somebody wrote a letter to the paper in which it appeared to call attention to the fact that Mouromtseff and his companions were not being tortured. He was obviously annoyed to learn that they were not being kept in dungeons and flogged daily. What about the horrors of Russian prisons about which we have heard so much? he complained. This individual had evidently been looking at Russian affairs through British spectacles. He could not conceive a prison system which was not uniform, and because prisoners were not tortured in Moscow, was persuaded that the accounts he had read of cruelty in other Russian prisons must be false. Unhappily he was wrong. The torturing and doing to death of prisoners has been proved over and over again in the Law Courts. I was in Russia at the time that Mr. Soskis, the St. Petersburg correspondent of the shortlived *Tribune*, communicated to that newspaper an account of the torturing of prisoners at Riga. The cruelties he described were of so revolting a kind that I refused to believe that they had taken place. Mr. Soskis, I thought, had been imposed on by some person

who desired to exploit him and the paper he represented in the interests of the revolutionary parties. That my judgment was utterly wrong was proved in the course of an official inquiry, and the Government was forced to admit in the Duma that prisoners had been flogged to extort confession of their guilt. Subsequently it became my duty to contribute some hideous accounts of the ill-treatment of prisoners to the press, and I do not propose to stain these pages by the repetition of such horrors.

The Russian is by nature a kind-hearted man. I cannot recall having met any Russian, gentle or simple, who did not appear to be good-natured, and I used to ask myself how it came about that people, so distinguished for their good qualities, could sometimes become monsters of cruelty. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that the Russian is often not master of himself. He is inclined to act on the spur of the moment, and the good or the bad in his nature gets the upper hand with amazing rapidity. This aspect of the national character has been noted by Russian writers. Poushkin embodied a story which illustrates it in a graceful poem. He told of a band of robbers who burnt down a house and murdered the inhabitants. When their horrid work was done, one of them espied a cat on the top of one of the tottering walls. It was mewing piteously,

and the murderer without a moment's hesitation scaled the wall at the risk of his life and rescued it. A tale of the governor of a Siberian prison is apposite. He was tried for torturing prisoners and condemned for treating them too well. He had allowed them to drink vodka, to smoke cigarettes, to get up private theatricals, and even to put up friends for the night in their cells. One day he woke up to the fact that they had become unmanageable, and suddenly changed from an amiable benefactor to a cruel tyrant, and caused them to be beaten and otherwise ill-used. A *tête-à-tête* dinner with Torquemada would be embarrassing, but I should expect a Russian torturer to be one of those persons with whom one can spend a couple of hours agreeably without having any particular desire ever to meet him again. The governor of a Russian prison does not set out with a theory that flogging prisoners is necessary; it suddenly occurs to him that it would be a good thing to do, and when he has once begun the practice he continues. Most people are cruel by nature, and if the instinct is acted on, it may easily develop into a passion. Flogging prisoners has been forbidden by the Emperor and by circulars of the Ministry of the Interior. It is not part of the Russian prison system, but it may easily become systematic in any prison. The only way to suppress it is by severe punishment. The Riga

torturers were dismissed, but quickly provided with other posts.

After the failure of the revolution, M. Stolypin undertook the task of restoring order in the country, and the prisons were inadequate for the accommodation of those who had to be punished.

Alexandra was a medical student. Some revolutionary tracts had been found in her lodging by the police, and she was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. There was no room in any of the prisons of St. Petersburg to put her, and she was told that she must wait to undergo her punishment until accommodation could be provided. It was exceedingly annoying. Alexandra had to sit for an examination in medicine, and unless she could manage to go to prison at once, she would be shut up at the time of the ordeal in the University and her scientific career be delayed an entire year. She waited three hours in the antechamber of an Assistant Minister on his reception-day, and when she was admitted to his cabinet placed the case before him. He was sympathetic but useless; all cells had been booked for weeks in advance. Alexandra was desperate and determined to put her pride in her pocket and to appeal to her grandfather, an influential General of conservative views who she knew thoroughly disapproved of her. He was pointedly disagreeable when she went to see him. "If you have come to get me

to help you to escape going to prison," he said, before she had time to explain her business, "you will be disappointed. I have heard about your conduct from your poor mother; you are a wicked girl, and deserve any punishment you may get."

"But I haven't come to ask you to keep me out of prison, but to use your influence to get me in," said Alexandra.

The old man shrieked with laughter and continued to laugh, while his granddaughter dabbed her eyes with a pocket-handkerchief.

"Do be nice, grandfather," she sobbed.

"*Horspidy!*" said the General, when he was able to control his merriment, "has it really come to this, that people have to have influence to get into prison?" and he sat down and wrote a polite note to the Director of Prisons, in which he presented his compliments to that gentleman and requested him to be so charming as to admit his granddaughter to one of the prisons without delay.

I told this pleasing story at the time I heard it to a Russian lady, who declared it to be monstrous nonsense; so I took the opportunity of a visit to the Director of the Prisons Department of the Ministry of the Interior, M. Kourloff, to ask him whether it could possibly be true.

"Certainly," he said, "many people have to

wait their turns to go to prison ; at the present time I want accommodation for seventy thousand persons more than that at my disposal."

This was the state of affairs in the summer of 1908, and in the following December M. Kourloff was obliged to ask the Duma to vote more than half a million pounds for the erection of new prisons and to meet the expense of keeping prisoners—an amount that raised the annual expenditure of his department to two million pounds. And no other course was open to M. Kourloff. In 1903 there had been 96,000 persons in the prisons of Russia, and in the spring of 1908 the Director had to squeeze 170,000 into the same space ; and the cry was : Still they come. · In order to extract this money from the Duma the Government was obliged to prove that it was required, and submitted a report on the state of the prisons. This document made unpleasant reading. It set forth that there was an absence of any sort of ventilation in most prisons, that the majority of the prisons were such old buildings that prisoners easily escaped, that they were often a danger to the lives of the persons living in them, that epidemics of typhoid fever had broken out in more than sixty-five prisons. The prison in the important city of Kieff was mentioned in this report as an example of one in which difficulties had arisen and inconveniences were experienced.

It had places for seven hundred prisoners and two thousand were confined in it. "The hospital consists of two barracks, one of stone and the other of wood, with ninety-five places; the latter building is so old that wind, rain, and cold penetrate. There are three hundred and thirty-nine persons in the hospital; the cubic space of air for each is therefore four and a half times less than it should be." On account of the small number of baths and wash-houses the prisoners could wash and change their linen "very rarely." At the end of 1906 there was an epidemic of typhoid fever in the prison, and two years after its outbreak it was still raging. At the time of the issue of the report three hundred of the prisoners were ill with typhoid. Letters from prisoners describing life under these conditions might be quoted, but this bald, official statement is sufficient to show the mental and physical suffering endured in many prisons. It must be remembered that many of the prisoners were persons accustomed not only to the decencies but to the refinements of life.

One of the good works we are told to perform in Holy Writ is the visiting of prisoners. In England we are usually deprived of this wholesome exercise; Russian prisoners have greater facilities given them for receiving visitors than English prisoners, and their friends are able to practise virtue by going

to see them. In theory relatives alone are permitted to visit prisoners, but in practice friends are passed in as cousins and aunts and brothers without inquiry as to their identity. I myself once visited a prisoner in the Cross Prison in St. Petersburg. Marya Ivanovna took me; she went every Sunday to see a student and posed as his sister, although they were not in any way related. We arrived before the great gate of the prison on a bleak winter morning. Some fifty persons were waiting. Most of them belonged to the working class. There were men in high boots and sheepskin coats, and worried-looking women with drab shawls over their heads. Marya Ivanovna greeted one or two well-dressed women in the group and several students.

"May I introduce my English friend?" she said to a girl in black. "He would like to have a talk with your husband; he can go in as his brother."

"Arkady Dmitrovitch will be quite excited at seeing a stranger," said the girl, giving me her hand to kiss. "Stranger" was the right word, for I had never heard of Arkady Dmitrovitch before that morning.

There was a rattling of bolts, the great door opened, and we pressed through into a passage. The gloomy courtyard of the prison could be seen through an iron gate at the other end. Then we passed into a long and excessively heated room.

At one end was a table at which an official sat to write down the names of visitors; at the other was a counter where clean linen, books, and little presents for the prisoners were handed in. A student undertook to have my name and Marya Ivanovna's written down; I thought it judicious not to inquire under what alias I was passing.

"We shall have to wait in this stuffy place for two hours," said Marya Ivanovna. "It's a horrible bore; but if one arrives late one cannot see the prisoners until three o'clock."

The crowd settled down to wait. Some of them were the friends of pickpockets, and others had come to see political prisoners. New visitors kept arriving, and I fled from the stifling room into the little courtyard. So did my temporary relative. She was a pretty girl, and had been a schoolmistress. Her position was very odd. She had been married five months and was still waiting for the time when she and her husband might have their honeymoon. When the man she was engaged to was arrested for eleven press offences it was arranged that they should be married in prison, so that she might have a clear right to visit him. It was quite a pretty wedding, I learnt, with music and the little bride in a white dress.

"The priest and the deacon were very kind," she said; "you know, as a rule, they hurry through the service, but on this occasion they span it out

and went as slowly as they could, so that we might stand side by side as long as possible. The music, too, was quite good. There was a choir of criminals, not politicals, and they sang delightfully. We wanted to have four of my husband's political friends to hold the crowns over our heads during the ceremony, but that was not allowed, and in the end we invited four students. After the service the Governor of the prison let us have a couple of hours' talk; we had a room to ourselves, and an official came in now and then to have a look at us."

"And when is the honeymoon to be?" I asked.

"We must wait six months," said the girl.

Marya Ivanovna had fled from the stifling waiting-room and was talking to a girl whom I had not noticed before. She beckoned to me, and I went to be presented to the new-comer.

"I have just arrived from Moscow and have come here straight from the station," said the girl. "Tell me, Masha, am I looking a dreadful fright? I feel disgracefully untidy after a night in the train."

Marya Ivanovna produced a little mirror, and the girl proceeded to tidy her hair and arrange her veil with as much care as if she was about to go into a crowded drawing-room. I was therefore not in the least surprised to hear that she had

come to see a young man who was not her brother, and not even her cousin.

"He's the son of the Assistant Governor of Warsaw," said Marya Ivanovna, "and his people are so ashamed of having one of the family involved in revolutionary propaganda that they won't come and visit him. He and my friend knew each other very well, and she has taken it into her head to visit him every week. She has come over from Moscow on purpose to see him today. He is to be here for four years."

"But if she visits him every week for four years," I said, "he will be almost bound to marry her in the end. Does he care for her?"

"I often wonder," said Marya Ivanovna, who had her own flirtation with a prisoner boy, less dangerous for him because she happened to have a husband.

We were frozen in the yard and grilled in the waiting-room, and the two hours of waiting were passed in changing one form of discomfort for the other. At last the iron gate was opened, and we crossed the big courtyard to the great building on the other side. There we were shown to a spacious and light room, where those whose friends would be in the second batch of prisoners allowed to receive guests had to wait. I followed the little bride to the reception-room, and Marya Ivanovna called to me to visit Cage 27 later.

On two sides of the room we entered were partitions of white wood with little windows covered with wire netting. Behind each window could be seen the blurred face of a prisoner. We found Arkady Dmitrovitch's cage.

"Miloshka, darling," said a voice from within, and the little wife twittered back. I stood aside, but she insisted on my coming forward, and presented me to her husband.

"Very agreeable," he said in the polite formula; then the two went on twittering with great rapidity, as though they were afraid they would never have time to say all the charming things that lovers have to say to each other. I closed my ears, not difficult, for at all the thirty cages people were talking to their friends, and the babble was so great that the warders who passed up and down the gangway could have caught nothing of the conversations. At the next window a wrinkled old woman and a ragged urchin of about six years old were speaking with a man. The boy was standing on tiptoe, so as to see the face behind the grille. My new relative was in hilarious spirits, bubbling over with excitement at having a chance to talk; but it made one feel almost giddy to look at him long, for between us were two grilles, the first of wire-work of rather coarse mesh, and about ten inches from it an inner grille of much finer mesh. The door at the back of the cage

opened for a moment and a warder thrust into the prisoner's hand a little box. It was a present his wife had brought, some collars and a silk scarf.

"How you spoil me!" he said to her; but he could not thank her with a kiss, for the double grille was between them.

Then he told me that he was reading a great deal and devoting part of his time to the study of English.

"Quick!" said Marya Ivanovna, running up to me; "come and see my student."

She took me down to Cage 27, and a golden head bowed at the other side of the wire lattice. There was no time to talk, the twenty minutes were up, and the prisoners had to make way for a new batch.

"Come another day," said he of the golden locks, and disappeared from the cage.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE WHITE CLERGY

THE Russian Church is served by two distinct orders of ecclesiastics: the black clergy, so called because they wear black habits, who are under monastic vows; and the white clergy, who are married. The bishops are chosen from the ranks of the monks, because they must be celibates.

Candidates for the secular priesthood are trained in seminaries. The spirit prevailing in these institutions is different from that in either a Catholic seminary or a Protestant training college. The Catholic seminarist, whatever he may become in after years, is usually zealous and looks forward to the difficult life for which he is preparing with fervour not untouched by fear. Besides being taught the humanities and theological science, he is helped to develop the faculties of the soul. He is aware that his usefulness as a priest depends largely on his interior life. The Protestant candidate for the ministry strives with not less earnestness to become a man of prayer and to approximate his life to the rule of the gospel. A Russian

A BISHOP.

clergyman is neither required to preach sermons nor to be a spiritual guide. He is an official whose duty it is to perform certain complicated ceremonies, to administer sacraments, to read prescribed prayers, and to convey benedictions. Hence the candidate for holy orders is inclined to think rather of the actions he will be called upon to perform than of the sort of man he should be. He enters the seminary to learn the mechanism of a profession, and before him is the pleasant prospect of marriage and a fireside of his own. His attitude to those set over him is not that of a disciple, who endeavours to observe the rules laid down for his conduct because he approves of the purpose for which they have been framed, but of a schoolboy who considers the evasion of rules a matter of pride and a legitimate exercise of ingenuity. A seminarist has told me with glee of the smuggling of forbidden vodka into the dormitories and of the secret revels that ensued. If the authorities are too severe, the students formulate their demands and refuse to work until they are granted. Strikes in seminaries are not infrequent and are of sufficient importance to be recorded in the press. In one case a bishop was obliged to expel a large number of students and to close the diocesan seminary for a time. Among the demands made by the students of another seminary was permission to go to the theatre, a somewhat startling request

in view of the fact that the Russian clergy are not permitted to enjoy this form of recreation. During the latter part of his course at a seminary the student must devote some time to love-making. The Orthodox Church requires the parochial clergy to be married, but holds that a man who has received holy orders is incapable of receiving the sacrament of matrimony; hence marriage is a necessary preliminary to ordination.

One might live for years in St. Petersburg without having the opportunity of making the acquaintance of a clergyman, for they are not to be met in cultured society, which they are as a rule fitted neither by birth nor by education to enter.

"There used to be a priest in St. Petersburg who was a gentleman and went into society, but I never heard of any other case," was the reply of a Russian friend whom I questioned on the subject.

I was fortunate enough to know a family connected with the clerical caste, and in this household I watched with interest the course of a clerical courtship. The eldest daughter, a very pretty girl, was engaged to a seminarist, who was naturally a constant visitor to the house. He had neither the appearance nor the manner of a budding ecclesiastic. He usually wore a student's uniform of military cut, occasionally appeared in an elegant frock-coat, and was a merry fellow. The young couple were very much in love with each other

but Vera used to say that she dreaded her sweetheart becoming a clergyman, because he would have to wear a cassock and a beard. He had a good voice and she hoped he might become an opera singer instead of a priest. However, in due course he secured the position of reader in the private chapel of a rich family, and the wedding was celebrated; quite a simple affair, they told me, with only Vera's brother and a friend to hold the crowns above the heads of the bride and bridegroom, but the bride had insisted on the extravagance of a veil of Brussels net and everybody had said that she looked sweet.

"They are like a pair of lovebirds," said Vera's mother, Sophia Petrovna, when I met her a month after the marriage; "they have a nice house, two hundred roubles a month, and my son-in-law has nothing to do but assist the clergy at two services a day."

I have lost sight of Vera and her husband. Probably he is now a deacon with long hair and a flowing beard and, as his voice is strong and beautiful, he may have received a cathedral appointment and in course of time become an archdeacon.

No clearer explanation of the functions of an archdeacon has been arrived at in the West than that they are archidiaconal. A Russian archdeacon is a deacon who can sing better than his fellows. For the proper performance of the

ceremonies of the Orthodox Church the services of a deacon are required, and many Russian clergymen do not become priests, but remain deacons permanently. In public worship they form a link between the congregation in the nave and the priest in the chancel. It falls to their lot to stand before the closed gates of the sanctuary to chant the long litanies which form an important part of the Russian liturgy. It is fine to hear a deacon sing the prayer for the Imperial Family. He begins on a low note and for every name in the long list he ascends a semitone, so that the prayer ends on a high note sustained at great length. To attain to the rank of archdeacon a man must possess a voice of great volume and sonority, which can be heard through the length and breadth of a great cathedral. A good voice is not essential to a priest, and bishops are inclined to cultivate the thin and attenuated tone appropriate to persons who are supposed to be broken down by excessive fasting.

And here is a tale of an archdeacon, told as it was told to me by Vera's mother, Sophia Ivanovna.

"Yesterday we went to the cemetery," she said, "because it was the anniversary of the death of my husband's father, and we had a *panahida* sung at his grave. After the service the others sat by the grave to eat luncheon,—we always take a basket of sandwiches and cakes,—but I did not feel inclined to remain with them, and I walked

away from the party to visit the grave of Father Victor. He was Archdeacon at the cathedral, and his death was a great blow to us. He was such a good man, and we all respected him greatly; indeed, he only had one fault—he drank. His voice was the most glorious I have ever heard, and people used to come from far and near to hear him sing service. I could not help shedding a few tears by his grave. On the stone they have written a very touching epitaph:

> "'Thy voice was like the rolling of the sea,
> It was like the sound of the thunder;
> Now there is only silence and a stone.'

"It was a great pity that he drank, for he was such a good man. Once he went into Finland with the Archbishop to assist at the consecration of a new church. After the service there was a grand dinner, and he took too much to drink. On the way home he had to travel in the same coupé as the Archbishop, and when the train stopped at some little Finnish railway station, he suddenly put his head out of the window and shouted in his stentorian voice: 'Beer, beer!' The master of the choir, who had taken the cathedral singers to the ceremony, was afraid that the Archbishop would be angry and send the Archdeacon away from the cathedral, so he said to him: 'I hope your High Super Holiness is not annoyed.' And the Archbishop smiled kindly and said, 'I am not

noticing anything.' It was very good of him. However, some time later, he did send the Archdeacon away, but the people made such a to-do about it that he was obliged to let him come back.

"The way in which he came to the cathedral was exceedingly odd. One evening a man in ragged clothes came to the master of the choir and asked to be allowed to sing to him, as he wished to get a place as a singer. I happened to be calling at the house at the time, and I remember that the master suddenly rushed into the room, shouting that he had found a man who was six singers rolled into one. He took the stranger into the choir at once. He was quite penniless, and I gave him an old suit of my husband's and a pair of boots. His voice was so glorious that they ordained him deacon, and in course of time he became archdeacon. His wife treated him very badly. She said she did not want to have any more children, so she turned him out; but he was such a good man that he used to give her all his money, except what he got from the collections. There was a very nice, modest girl, who was very fond of him. She never took any money from him, for she really loved him, and, indeed, when he was ill she paid for a doctor to come and see him. Some people spoke against him because of this girl. He felt that very much. I remember once he came

to see us and spoke of it. 'I hear that people are speaking against me because I go to see this girl,' he said. 'I think it is very unkind of them. My wife has turned me out, and what am I to do?' We still feel his loss very deeply. He was such a good man, and I had the greatest respect for him."

The attitude of Sophia Ivanovna to the proceedings of the Archdeacon was as remarkable as the tale she told. She was a good and religious woman, and in some ways puritanical. Once she took me to hear a *moleben* sung in the chapel of an icon reputed to possess miraculous powers. After the short service I suggested that we should drink tea in a café or restaurant. She refused. Her mother, she said, always told them that they could not expect a blessing unless they went to a *moleben* fasting. To go to a worldly restaurant after praying would not be seemly. Moreover, a woman should only go to a restaurant with her husband. She loved the services of the church, and sometimes she would take a book and read to me a piece of liturgical poetry, translating the old Russian of the Orthodox rite as she read. She belonged to a section of Russian society in which old-fashioned customs, and ideas, and views of life are conserved, and in which people speak with candour and precision of matters that we are accustomed to conceal or to indicate vaguely. The sins to which nature has made men the most prone appeared to her the

most venial. Lying and dishonesty and harshness were to her less excusable. She ruled herself by a severe code, but it did not occur to her to apply it to others.

When a good and pious woman regards the misdoing of a clergyman with such benevolence and mildness it can be understood that the general public does not require or expect sanctity or moral worth in the clergy. Ecclesiastics are necessities, and it is preferable to have good ones to bad ones, just as it is preferable to employ plumbers of good character to plumbers who are dishonest. The essential is that priest and plumber should do the work required of them. If an English vicar is a drunkard, nobody goes to church. The Russian attitude is different. If a priest is vicious and negligent the parishioners compel him to do his work. The priest may be on the high road to perdition, but that lamentable fact supplies no excuse for his flock to abandon the worship of God. They hold in a practical manner the doctrine enforced in one of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England that the unworthiness of the minister does not impair the benefits of the sacraments. They consider the highest act of worship is to assist at the offering of the Christian sacrifice, and as a priest alone is empowered to offer it, he must be compelled to do so in order that his parishioners may be afforded the opportunity

of performing a duty, and of deriving the spiritual benefits accruing from it. Russians do not require their clergy to preach, and sermons are not often heard in Orthodox churches. Hence the parishioners of a bad priest are not called on to hear him expound a standard of living with which his own life is in discord. The neglect of preaching affords some explanation of the difference in the attitude of the Russian and English laity to their clergy.

It is commonly supposed that priests have the evil eye; but its malevolent influence can be averted by spitting. In spite of this unpleasant property, priests and people are usually on good terms. The country parson and his humble parishioners are men of the same class and of the same manner of life. The Batushka—little Father—has his bit of land, and often combines the work of a peasant farmer with his ecclesiastical duties. I was once taken to call at a country vicarage by a country squire, and the sole topic of conversation was the breeding of cocks and hens. The vicarage was a wooden cottage, and the vicar and his wife received us with that mixture of friendliness and respect one would expect if taken by an Englishman to see a dependant on his estate. They were worthy and humble persons with a large family and small means. A Russian clergyman is paid partly by time and partly by piece-work. From the State he receives a small income, perhaps not

more than forty pounds a year, and his parishioners pay him fees for his services. Marriages, burials, and christenings are a source of income to him, and St. John's day is one of the most lucrative in the year. Probably a third of the men in the parish are called John, and each of them will expect the vicar to call on the festival to say prayers and bestow a benediction. At each house a small fee is given, and the vicar must be invited to drink a little glass of vodka ; indeed, on St. John's day the good man sometimes returns home a little overcome. There may be only one Narcissus or Plato in the parish, and on their days temptation is less and returns are meagre. In some villages the priest takes a toll of bread from the people. He goes round the village with a little hand-cart, collecting loaves. A Russian friend of mine went to stay with a country parson and was astonished at the great provision of bread piled up in the kitchen. His first thought was that the good man had an exaggerated idea of his appetite, and when he laughingly asked how so many loaves were to be eaten, the host explained that he had just made the round of the village to get the supply, and that most of it would be consumed by his pigs. The merits of priest-fed hams are superlative. In Lent and at Eastertide, when most Russians confess their sins to a priest, the work of hearing confessions is profitable, especially in

CLERGY CARRYING ICONS IN PROCESSION.

great cities where penitents are numerous. The fee is left to the discretion of the penitent, and a person of moderate means will possibly give the priest a three-rouble note. The deacon who registers the fact that one has been to confession must also receive a small *douceur*. The custom of paying for this sacrament is forbidden in the West with such strictness that it is not allowed to place an alms-box near a confessional, for fear that strangers should be led to think that payment for absolution was exacted. The present Metropolitan of St. Petersburg tried to abolish the practice, but the attempt was keenly resented by the clergy and proved ineffectual. Payments for the celebration of the liturgy, for dirges, and for the recitation of special prayers are also made. In city churches a priest and reader will chant a short office to obtain some desired benefit or blessing for as little as a rouble. The clergy of a church which possesses an icon with a reputation for working miracles are fortunate. Considerable sums can be made by taking the picture to the sick, or by using it on occasions when the benediction of some new undertaking is desired. A short service in the presence of an icon is desirable at the opening of a new shop, a café, or business premises, and even Jewish traders sometimes consider it expedient to make a concession to the sentiment of their customers and to pay for the

benediction of the Church on commercial enterprise. A good benefice is not one with large endowments, but with numerous and rich parishioners. The Russian system of paying the clergy is not without its advantages. An English clergyman can keep his church shut six days in the week; pious persons who would like to have the advantage of attending daily prayers have no redress, and the income of their pastor is not affected by his negligence. Russians can usually have such religious functions as they desire performed by paying for them. The labourer is worthy of his hire, whether it be paid in quarterly cheques or in daily doles.

It has been necessary to speak of evils existing in the Church in order to make the attitude of the laity to the clergy clear. It would be wrong to give the impression that the Russian clergyman is usually lax in his life. He is, in point of fact, usually a God-fearing, if not a spiritual, man, a good husband and a good father. "Nobody so cherished as a priest's wife" is a saying in Galicia, where the Uniats, who are under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, have a rite similar to the Russian rite and a married clergy. The saying would be equally appropriate in Russia. No more serious calamity can befall a Russian clergyman than the loss of his wife. He cannot marry again, and without the partnership of a woman the life of a

poor man with a family is beset with difficulties. Priests often make great sacrifices to give their children a good education. In former times the son of a priest usually entered holy orders. This is still common, but young people in country parsonages are apt to dream dreams their parents never saw, and to refuse to tread the path chosen for them. The peace of clerical households is disturbed at times by strange doctrines of life and vague agnosticism.

Father Vassili had a son and a daughter, Ivan and Marya. People used to say that it was from the great love he bore them that he let wild Ivan da Marya, the plant with a blossom that is half yellow and half blue, grow in his garden. Ivan was sent to the university at St. Petersburg and the priest spent much of his time in tending his daughter, for she was in a consumption and she had no mother. A year passed and Ivan returned. He came back to the village filled with new ideas he had learnt from companions in the great city. His father was alarmed at the political views he expounded, but the sick girl saw beauty in his vision of a world without poverty and injustice. He went to church in respect to his father and from habit, but he had ceased to believe, although he could not advance sounder reasons for his unbelief than he could earlier have given for the creed he had been taught. He brought with him from

the city many revolutionary tracts, and he took long walks through the countryside, distributing them to the peasants. It was not long before the police learnt that a dangerous propaganda was being made, and their suspicions fell on Ivan. They came to the parsonage to search for illegal literature, and it happened that the hour they chose was one of the saddest in the priest's life. Marya had been fading all the summer, and when the head of police rapped at the door her father was preparing to give her the viaticum. He opened the door of her room and pointed to the bed and to the table made ready for the Sacrament. "Go where you will," he said, "but do not disturb the peace of a dying girl who is about to receive her Maker." Such a request could not be refused. The police did their work quietly and thoroughly in the other rooms and went away, having found nothing. Marya had saved her brother. A servant had heard that the search had been planned, and had told the girl, who had directed her to bring Ivan's books and pamphlets to her and had hidden them in her bed.

The tale is drawn from life and serves to show the working of new leaven in the most conservative class of Russian society. Clergymen are to be found who refuse to believe that Orthodoxy and Autocracy are inseparable. Father Petroff, a priest whose writings on the spiritual life have been

widely circulated, was a Liberal member of the Imperial Duma, and the boldness with which he advanced the principles of constitutional liberty led to his disgrace. The coadjutor of the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, a good and learned prelate, omitted the Tsar's title of Autocrat when he celebrated the liturgy in the Kazan cathedral a short time after the publication of the October Manifesto. When rebuked by his superior, he argued that in creating the Duma the Sovereign had abandoned the claim to be an autocrat. The reply was not forgotten. The Bishop became a suspect, and was subsequently deprived of his office by the Holy Synod and sent to live in a monastery. He was a man of high principle and refused to trim his opinions to suit the ecclesiastical authorities. Some months before his fall he told his friends that it was inevitable. I saw him perform the ceremonies of Easter night in St. Isaac's cathedral seven years ago. He was very tall and very powerfully built, and I remember his kindly smile when a child came to kiss his hand.

By his Manifesto of April 1905 the Tsar renounced his claim to autocratic authority over the souls of his subjects. Before that date the Russian emperors exercised a power which Montalembert, roused to fury by the cruelty with which it was being applied to the Polish peasantry, justly called the worst form of tyranny. They punished those

of their subjects who left the Church of which they are supreme governors by exiling them to Siberia, and their instruments did not hesitate to force men into the Orthodox fold by fraud when such a course appeared advisable on political grounds. A relative of one of my Russian friends left the Orthodox Church and entered another communion. Not possessing the martyr's spirit, this lady concealed her change of spiritual allegiance and, dying before the great reform of 1905, was buried with the rites of the Church she had spurned in life. A Russian, who is still a young man, went into Germany to study and there became a Catholic. He made no attempt to conceal his change of religious opinions, and in order to escape consequent punishment was forced to remain abroad. A number of persons returned to Russia in 1905 after spending years of exile in Siberia, whither they had been sent in consequence of their refusal to submit to the claims of the Established Church, or, in the consecrated phrase, to believe as the Tsar believes and to pray as he prays.

When Nicholas II., on his own initiative, adopted a policy of toleration, a Conservative newspaper of Moscow declared that his Manifesto had destroyed the Orthodox Church. That such a damaging admission was made on the Orthodox side is evidence of the dismay with which the Imperial declaration was received. These fears

have proved to be groundless. The Manifesto has given new life to the Church. The intellectual and spiritual sloth of the clergy was partly due to the assurance they possessed that their flocks would be kept in the fold by the police. They now see that they must bestir themselves if the sheep are not to wander to pastures whither other shepherds would lead them. They quickly discovered that they were ill prepared to withstand the competition of Baptist preachers, whose simplicity and earnestness attract the common people, or that of the Catholic clergy who surpass them in learning and ability. Hence a result of the Manifesto was the assembly of a great missionary congress in holy Kieff to devise means of combating Baptists and Catholics, the most powerful rivals of the Orthodox clergy. The congress did little but denounce; but the vigour of the vituperations employed by its members supplied proof that they had arisen from sleep. A public disputation between an Old Believer and a champion of Orthodoxy took place in the presence of the bishops assembled in Kieff, and was conducted in the manner admired when Bishop Jewel and the Jesuit Harding had their tedious controversy. The Elizabethan prelate relieved the dulness of theological debate by reminding his adversary from time to time that he had learnt some subtlety of controversy from his father the devil, and the

modern defender of Orthodoxy at Kieff, when argument was exhausted, would hurl at his opponent the information that his proper place was with all heretics in the bottomless pit. While the adoption by the Russian clergy of so antiquated a method of defence is proof of their want of culture, it shows, and for this reason is adduced here, that they are being stirred to life. Once aroused, they will throw away the rusty tools they have hastily seized from their ancient armoury and discover that learning and sanctity are sharper weapons. Many of them already realize that a reformation of the Church is needed. A large number of ecclesiastics and of laymen are at the present time urging that a council of the Church, with power to initiate reforms, should be assembled. They desire to see restored to the Church the independence of which Peter the Great deprived it. When that monarch ascended the throne the Patriarch of Moscow was the supreme spiritual authority. It was the custom for the Tsar himself to lead the ass on which the Patriarch passed through the streets of Moscow on Palm Saturday, and the secular ruler held the golden stirrup for the spiritual ruler to mount his beast. It is thought that it was during his sojourn in England that Peter determined to dethrone the Patriarch and to seize his power. The English kings had made themselves Supreme Governors

of the English Church and he resolved to follow their example and unite the spiritual and the secular power in the person of the monarch. He abolished the patriarchate and placed the Church under the government of the Holy Synod, presided over by a minister responsible to the Sovereign. The system introduced by Peter still exists, but the introduction of representative government tends to modify it, as the procurator of the Holy Synod must present his budget to the Imperial Duma, in which Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, and Mohammedans, as well as members of the Orthodox Church, have the right to criticize it. It is of interest to note that the adoption of similar methods of Church government in England and Russia has produced a movement in both countries to wrest the Church from the control of the State. The advocates of autonomy for the Church of England are not few, and the restoration of the patriarchate of Moscow is an end for which many Russians are working.

There is beauty in the Russian's toleration of clerical laxity. There is something of the divine in his understanding of human weakness, and, because he knows that he himself is not without sin, he refuses to throw a stone at the sinner. Yet in no land is sanctity more reverenced, and nowhere does a deeper conviction of the power of holiness exist. The character of a clergyman is not a

matter of indifference to a Russian. The case of a humble person has already been mentioned who preferred the ministrations of the Kieff monks in St. Petersburg to those of the St. Alexander Nevsky monastery, because she believed the former to be strict and the latter to be worldly. Conscious of the splendour of the ideal presented to them in the gospels they may read in their homes, in the majestic liturgy of their church, in the icons of Christ, and His Mother, and the saints they see around them, high and low alike display unbounded enthusiasm for the man who appears to have in some measure attained it. The proof of sanctity they require is power with God, for they are convinced that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The poor pressed on Father John of Kronstadt to kiss the hem of his robe, and Alexander III. called the old man to comfort him in the hour of death, and died in his arms. I saw him once brought into the great military riding school in St. Petersburg to address a patriotic meeting which had begun with political oratory and dissolved into a sumptuous religious ceremony. There was suddenly a rush of the crowd to one side of the immense hall, and I could see an old priest being half carried to the distant stage at a great rate by two stalwart men who supported him on either side. Had he attempted to enter the building in a more dignified manner he

would never have reached the platform ; for each man in the assembly seemed to desire to waylay him to get the blessing of a man who stood near to heaven. Thousands knelt in the muddy streets when the body of Father John was brought from Kronstadt to the capital to be buried in the chapel of a nunnery, and his tomb has become a place of pilgrimage. I felt something of a usurper when I once sat by the old priest in his house at Kronstadt and he threw his arm affectionately round my shoulders as he talked ; for many a Russian peasant would have walked a thousand miles and have given all he possessed to be in the place I occupied.

The fame of John of Kronstadt is sufficient excuse to give some account of that visit. Tales of strange proceedings in Kronstadt were being told in the capital. A woman called by the people Porphyria, in allusion to the queenly mantle she wore, was said to have passed in procession through the streets of the town, surrounded by attendants bearing palms, and hailed as Queen of All the Earth. She was reputed to be the Blessed Virgin returned to earth, and was said to give audience to the devout in a dark chamber into which she flashed with a halo of electric lights around her head. Several persons claiming to be Apostles had appeared in Kronstadt, and they and their followers were teaching that Father John was

Christ. The report that Porphyria was under the protection of Father John increased my curiosity to see him, and I wrote to ask him to receive me. A telegram told me to come the following day. It was winter-time, and I sledged across the sea between Kronstadt and the mainland in the teeth of a wind against which thick furs seemed inadequate protection. Ice yachts with great white sails were skimming over the ice. The Batushka was not at home, I was told, and had left a letter for me. "You have asked an audience of me; I grant it you," were its opening words. As I was turning to go, the famous priest appeared in an elegant sledge with a fat coachman. He had expected me earlier in the day, and in case he should fail to see me had been at the pains to write the letter. I had told him frankly that I wished to write about him and should therefore like to hear his reply to the attacks made by writers in the St. Petersburg press. His reply was given in the letter and must be quoted :—

"It is the godless journalists, who write in our cheap newspapers, who attack me. They are followers of a godless leader, Tolstoi; and I am a cataract on the eye to them, because I have never ceased to protest against them. They would like to sweep me off the face of the earth, but I pay no attention to them. If you want to know what

Russia thinks of me, ask her. She will say a good word for me. I did not seek glory; He gave it to me who said, 'He that glorifieth Me, I will glorify.'"

The gentleness of the old man was in contrast to the fierceness of this denunciation. He took me upstairs to his flat, and we sat down side by side at a table in a room which appeared to be the dining-room. During the conversation a man who may have been a servant, a disciple, or both, stood behind us, as though he thought that the foreigner might be a terrorist with a pistol in his pocket. I was a little surprised at the sumptuousness of Father John's dress and the comfort of the house. He wore a robe of rich black brocade, with bell-shaped sleeves turned back with crimson silk, and on his breast glittered a magnificent cross set with precious stones. We spoke of the Manifesto published in the spring of the year by which the Emperor had granted his subjects religious liberty. Father John expressed disapproval of it.

"Many persons are too ignorant to understand the importance of belonging to the Orthodox Church," he said, "and it is therefore a pity to let them have the right to leave it and to fall into error."

Of Porphyria he said shortly, "She never called herself the Mother of God," and showed no

inclination to pursue the subject. He had, I think, been imposed on by this woman, and there is no question but that he was exploited in his later years by persons whom his simplicity led him to trust.

After a short conversation Father John had to go out to visit a sick person, and his great-nephew, a child of twelve, took me into the room in which he worked and slept. At first sight it appeared to be a compromise between an oratory and the atelier of a dressmaker. Rows of splendid silver icons reached almost to the ceiling on the wall behind the writing-table, and two or three dozen silk dresses hung on screens, hiding the bed and washstand. These garments were cassocks presented by pious persons. Most of them were of sombre colours, but two were pale blue, wadded for use in winter, and one of dove colour had sewn on it a jewelled order conferred by the Emperor. The little bed was spread with a quilt of sky-blue satin. A saint with a satin quilt! I confess that I went away disappointed. Perhaps I was wrong. A sinner may not have the sense to know a saint when he meets one; and saints there have been who wore crowns and lived in palaces. Father John prayed, and wonders, that neither doctors nor men of science have been able to explain satisfactorily, followed. Russians saw in these wonders the proof of his sanctity; but the

flower of holiness may wither beneath the gaze of men.

Those whom an old writer has called "inner livers" may be rare among the Russian clergy, yet I have seen among them men who bore the stamp of sanctity. There is a light that gives beauty to faces that are not comely. I have seen its radiance on the faces of men of different communions and it is unmistakable. I saw it once in the countenance of a bishop who was praying for the murdered Serge Alexandrovitch.

# CHAPTER XII

## THE BLACK CLERGY

OUTSIDE the sleepy station of Sergievo, forty miles from Moscow, I hired a carriage and pair for sixpence to drive into the town. The driver whirled me along a country road between green fields to the brow of a little hill and showed me an undreamt-of vision. On the rising ground across the valley rose a pile of buildings with domes and minarets of blue and apple-green and milk-white and gold, standing within white ramparts cut by nine red towers. It was the Troitska Lavra, the monastery to which a hundred thousand souls make pilgrimage every year, but it might have been the city of a Persian tale, translated to the heart of Russia. The crimson west threw a rosy light on high walls and cupolas. A deep bell called to evening prayer. To multitudes this is the threshold of heaven, and, as I went into the shadows of the valley, I felt its peace descend upon me.

The next day I went through the great gateway of the monastery, decorated with frescoes of scenes in the life of St. Serge, the holy founder, and

A MONK SOWING CORN.

wandered about the vast enclosure. Divine service was being performed in one of the thirteen churches. The monks were not attempting to follow its liturgical complications in books, but contented themselves with standing in the nave of the church and bowing and crossing themselves from time to time. In a courtyard, near the refectory, a few pilgrims were drinking the water of a fountain supplied by a sacred spring, cool and refreshing to the body and of benefit to the soul. I climbed up to the broad ramparts which enclose the Lavra in a circuit of half a mile, fortifications which the Polish army of thirty thousand men that besieged the monastery for sixteen months at the beginning of the seventeenth century were unable to penetrate. Some of the monks' cells gave on the ramparts and, as I passed them, a desire to know the inner life of the place took possession of me and, in the moment of mastery, made me knock at a cell door. A voice within bade me enter. I regretted my temerity when I was within the room. Before me stood two men with flowing beards, dressed in loose black robes and wearing high head-dresses covered with black veils, that fell on the shoulders and gave a majestic appearance to the wearers. Unable to withdraw and compelled to account for my intrusion, I offered some feeble explanation. The two monks listened gravely, and when I paused, half expecting to hear them

say that the disturbance of their contemplation of heavenly things was unwarrantable and impious, one of them observed that my appearance was an occurrence of extraordinary interest.

"*Otchen interesny* [very interesting]," he repeated. "Now, you are an Englishman, tell us what is the capital of England?"

"London," I said.

"So London is the capital of England," he continued; "that is most interesting. And Paris is the capital of France, isn't it?"

"It is," I answered.

"And what is the capital of Germany?" asked the other monk.

"Berlin," I said, and nearly laughed outright.

"And Chicago is the capital of America, isn't it?" he asked.

I submitted that New York was the capital of the United States, and with that the geographical excursus ended.

The two spoke together for a moment, and then the elder turned to me and said, "We are busy now, but we are free all the afternoon; therefore in an hour's time we shall come to your hotel to take you for a walk. We shall show you country monasteries and that will be very interesting for you."

Nothing could have pleased me better. I thanked them suitably and withdrew. In less

than an hour I had the honour of receiving them in my room.

"If you please, on the divan," I said, with proper regard for etiquette, and waved them to the green rep sofa.

They sat down on that honourable piece of furniture, and I called their attention to the *zakouska* and the carafe of vodka I had had set out on the table before them.

"What makes you think that monks like vodka?" asked the elder.

"I know they do," I said with conviction, filling the glasses.

"Do you think we ought to, Metrophan?" said the elder.

And Metrophan thought they might permit themselves to take a little glass. In point of fact they each took two, and they also consumed ham, sausage, raw herring, and pickled mushrooms. Their method of eating was new to me. They held their mouths five inches above their plates and filled them rapidly with food by the aid of their fingers, reserving knives and forks for the propulsion of the more greasy morsels. This process made conversation impracticable, and the comparative silence that reigned in the room while it lasted was only broken when the dishes were empty and the two asked if I had any books with pictures to show them. Now, it so happened that

the only illustrated book I had was Maupassant's *Les Sœurs Rondoli* with pictures that made it unsuitable for inclusion in a monastic library. Being in reckless mood, I gave it them. They seized it eagerly and began to turn the pages, stopping to look at every picture. I watched them getting nearer a dangerous page with a young person in the altogether; but when they came to it they did not rise up and rebuke me, they chortled with glee.

"Kiss it, Aaron," said the younger, jerking it to his companion's lips.

"Are there any monks in England?" asked Metrophan, when the charm of the book was exhausted.

"Yes," I said, "but they are very serious persons."

"*Vot tak!*" he said. "Well, we are not serious; we are merry monks here in Russia."

And then they made a tour of the room, laying hands on everything, thrusting them into my bags in the hope of finding some object of interest.

"Is this for paper?" asked Father Metrophan, holding up a large envelope.

And when all had been examined and I had stated how I lived, what my age was, who my parents were, what my clothes cost, and answered many questions, it was time to start on our walk.

"We are going a long way," said Father Metro-

phan, "five versts there and five versts back, therefore it will be well for us to be supplied with food. Perhaps you will be so good as to buy some."

I asked what I was to get.

"Black bread, a box of sardines, and a bottle of vodka," said Metrophan, with a readiness that made me think he had considered the question beforehand.

I bought these things and a packet of sweetmeats, and we went on our way out of the little town and over meadow-lands into the country. It was a fine summer afternoon, and as we walked leisurely through the fields I took my turn at questioning. Father Aaron, I learnt, was forty, and Father Metrophan thirty-two. They were both choir monks and had been ordained deacons. They would become priests if the Archimandrite of the Lavra desired it, but they had no particular desire to enter the higher order. They each received sixty guineas a year for pocket-money and were obliged to devote part of that sum to the purchase of clothes. They also made a little extra money when they officiated at the altar. Metrophan complained that he had helped to perform the liturgy in one of the churches of the monastery that morning and only made a rouble. There had been, it appeared, two roubles in the collection and the priest took half. The food was passable, and the

black bread baked in the abbey could not be beaten. They were required to be in church from six to eight hours a day and had no other occupation. There were about six hundred monks in the Lavra. Some of them had been impelled to come to the monastery by youthful enthusiasm at an age when life had not revealed its greatest secrets. Others were sent by parents who desired one of their sons to be dedicated to the service of God. I gathered that one had to make the best of the position in which one had been placed, and that, with a little management, it was possible to have a fairly good time. One need not, it seemed, be cheated of life's primitive pleasures. Father Metrophan once chided the older man for speaking too frankly; but Father Aaron would not be checked.

"It is very interesting for him to know exactly how we live," he said, and turning to me, added, "You knew the theory, now you are learning the practice."

And as they talked I thought of the men I had known who had made the great renunciation and become monks, men who had grown up with me and with whom I had talked years ago in college rooms of everything under heaven. They went their way and I went mine. When we met in later years I saw in their faces, in their manner, in their conversation, that they had been fined in the sieve

of prayer and discipline, and knew that I was not fit to black their boots. I asked myself how it came about that the effect on character of monastic life in the West and monastic life in the East appeared to be so different; and it seemed to me that the answer to the question lay in Father Aaron's statement that in his monastery monks did nothing but attend religious ceremonies. All Western monasticism is based on the rule of St. Benedict, and in that rule it is laid down that besides the recitation of the office, "the work of God," as Benedict called it, intellectual or manual work shall be performed by every monk and nun. Adherence to this rule has been the salvation of Western monasticism, and when it has been relaxed decay has set in. Lack of employment and consequent laziness is the root of monastic corruption in Russia. The word "corruption" is not too strong a one to use. It is not possible in a book intended for general reading to justify its employment by painting the darkest shadows in this picture of Russian monastic life. A story published in one of the St. Petersburg papers may serve as an indication of the state of affairs. Some nuns went from a convent in St. Petersburg to Pskoff, in order to find a suitable house for a new foundation. They called at a monastery and asked the prior to help them. And so a party of monks and nuns went forth to scour the countryside for a house and

turned the excursion into a jolly picnic in the woods, ending the day with a ball at the monastery, at which it was said the cake-walk was danced. That this story was not a malicious invention was proved by the fact that the prior of the monastery was severely punished for the scandal by removal from office and banishment to another house. The tale appeared to astonish nobody and was printed in an obscure corner of the newspaper, as being of small interest. The Government and the ecclesiastical authorities seem to be aware that lack of employment is a prime cause of the disorders in the monasteries, for a circular was issued three years ago in which it was stated that monasteries ought not to be turned into comfortable country houses, and directions were given to dismiss the servants of monasteries, in order that the monks might be under the necessity of working. The drinking of vodka in monasteries has been prohibited, but Father Aaron gave me to understand that the order would not be observed in the letter.

"One of the bishops wrote to his clergy the other day," he said, "to tell them that they should make the same sacrifice as the monks and give up drinking vodka. He is so naive that he thinks that because circulars are sent round people are going to stop drinking spirits."

The monks at the first monastery we visited did not give us vodka. They gave us kvass, a

mild and refreshing summer beverage made of black bread. Their house was called the Monastery of Bethany, a name derived from the remarkable iconostasis in the church. Instead of the usual screen separating the sanctuary from the nave, there was an irregular and lofty structure, meant to represent the Mount of the Transfiguration. It filled the east end of the building and was covered with moss and paper flowers, amidst which reposed many little toy rabbits, sheep, and other animals. At the top, reached by a staircase, were figures of Christ and of the three before whom He was transfigured, painted and cut out of thin boards; and at the base was a grotto with an icon of the resurrection of Lazarus. This distressing eccentricity of piety was erected by the saintly Platon, Metropolitan of Moscow, who built the church in 1783 and spent his declining years in the monastery. The monks showed us the suite of rooms he had occupied and his favourite chair, with a seat that could be moved up and down by means of a rod at the side. In his second childhood the old man's chief source of amusement was to sit in this chair and joggle himself up and down. My companions thought the mountain with the toy animals very edifying, and when they had walked about the church and kissed a large number of icons we resumed our walk, and went to a little *skeet*, or priory, where the monks never eat meat, and were

said to live very strictly. Perhaps as a sign of their austerity they were summoned to prayers by an instrument which has its origin in the times of the primitive Christian Church, a board struck by a wooden hammer. Aaron and Metrophan said they would not like to live under the severe discipline obtaining in this monastery, and took me farther to a third religious house, where we intended to have tea and consume the victuals we had brought. Father Seraphim, a friend of my companions, met us in the spacious and pleasant courtyard and we made over the vodka, the sardines, and the bread to him. He concealed the forbidden bottle beneath his robe, and went to get the samovar ready while we visited the cemetery. I had a kodak with me, and Father Metrophan placed himself in a devotional attitude at the grave of a monk, whom he said had been his spiritual father, for me to photograph him. Then we went to tea—a cheery little meal served in Father Seraphim's cell. One or two other monks had been invited, and a novice with a cloud of golden hair enlivened proceedings by playing the guitar. There was great merriment when somebody discovered a hairpin on the floor. It had been probably used by our host to fasten up his long hair in a neat bun, as is the habit of some of the clergy, both black and white, but the discovery helped to make things go, and there was great laughter.

After tea one of the guests asked me to come and see his cell, a comfortable but not luxurious room, ornamented with plants, and one or two little pictures of popular actresses taken from illustrated papers. He and another monk came with us over a little river and through peaceful meadows, aglow in the rays of the setting sun, on the way home.

The next day I met the novice with the cloud of golden hair outside the great gate of the Lavra, where he was buying apples at a stall. He asked me to have tea and took me to his cell.

"It is a wretched place," he said, as we entered a dismal and untidy room, "but, you see, the Prior caught me coming into the Lavra late one night, dressed in secular clothes. He punished me by making me live in this horrid room, which I have to share with another novice."

He went away to prepare the samovar, and I amused myself by glancing at a Russian version of *Ivanhoe* he had borrowed from the library. When he returned I asked him why he had come to the monastery.

"I was a telegraph clerk," he said, "and when the great strike came I did not care to be mixed up with it, and having nothing to do, I thought it would be rather a good idea to become a monk. After all, one can have a fairly good time here. I have to be in church from six to eight hours a day; now and then there are some lectures for

the novices, that is all. The rest of the time is my own. The food is not all one could desire, but is not bad; indeed, the bread is the best I ever tasted. Then, of course, one can generally manage to get out into the town and have a good time two or three times a month. It was really sheer bad luck that the Prior caught me the other day."

I asked him if he would not like to live as St. Serge, the holy founder of the Lavra, had lived.

"Not now," he answered; "think of it—I am only twenty-two, and one wants to have a good time when one is young."

I did think of it, and I thought of a mystery play I had seen in St. Petersburg in which a young monk rushed out of the gate of a monastery crying, "*Hotchu jhit* [I want to live, I want to live]," and fell into the arms of a beautiful maiden.

"Perhaps I may live severely when I am thirty," continued the novice, "but not now, oh, not now! There are some men in this monastery who live severely, perhaps a hundred and fifty, but they are chiefly men of noble family who have come here because they wish to lead religious lives. Perhaps I shall not stay, perhaps I shall not take the vows."

"I hope you won't," I said, "because you cannot be happy here unless you lead a monk's

ST. SERGE.
(From an Icon.)

life as it should be led, and on your own showing you are doing nothing of the kind. I hope you will go back to the world."

"There is something in what you say," he said, but I do not think he understood me.

A bell began to toll and he rose to go to office. I saw him later standing in one of the churches, bowing low and crossing himself while the crystal voices of the choir rose in the eternal prayer of the Orthodox Church: "Lord have mercy."

I did not buy a book, professing to reveal the iniquities of the Lavra, which I saw displayed in the window of a shop near the monastery. I was already sufficiently depressed. To be a worldling in an ascetic's robe, turning an irksome wheel of prayer and seizing by stealth on earthly pleasures, to lose the best of this world without gaining a foretaste of heaven—such a life is the most pitiful known to man.

And here am I moralizing when I should be telling a tale. Once upon a time, then, I was in the ancient city of Pskoff. Down the hill from the market-place I went to the bank of the river, crossed the long bridge of boats to the other side, and wandered through fields to a monastery by the water's brink. Two or three monks and a couple of singers were chanting an office in the church. There was nobody else there except an old woman, and I sat down on a bench to listen to

the singing. Presently an elderly monk approached me.

"Young man," he said, "have you got bad legs?"

"No," I replied, standing up.

"Then why do you sit when we are standing?"

"I am not Orthodox; I am a foreigner."

He appeared to be greatly taken aback.

"Come," he said, seizing my arm and moving towards the door, "you must see the Prior; he will talk with you in various languages—in French, in German, in English."

He appeared to be unduly excited, but I made no resistance, and was led across a courtyard and up a staircase, at the head of which we met another monk.

"This young man is a foreigner," said the first monk; "it is very interesting, and the Prior must speak with him in various languages—in French, in German, in English."

They went away and left me standing on the landing. Presently they returned with the Prior, a tall man with a good manner. He began blessing me.

"This young man is a foreigner," said my captor, whereupon the Prior left off blessing and shook hands; "it is very interesting, and you must talk to him in various languages—in French, in German, in English."

"But I can't," said the Prior to me; "what are we to do?"

"Why not talk Russian?" I suggested, and we did, until the first monk exclaimed with great vehemence—

"No, no, no; in various languages—in French, in German, in English."

The Prior diagnosed his case with a searching glance.

"Be off," he snapped at him.

The creature was drunk. He bowed low and disappeared, while the Prior resumed his interesting remarks on the history of his monastery in the eleventh century with admirable coolness. We quickly brought the interview to an end by mutual consent, and I retired. At the foot of the staircase the drunken monk was waiting for me. He begged most earnestly that I would return the next day, promising, as an inducement, that he would tell me many interesting things about St. Olga, who was born in the neighbourhood.

The ability to speak foreign languages appears to be a rare and highly prized attainment in monasteries. Once I was in the grounds of the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra, in St. Petersburg, and had occasion to ask some question of a monk. When he found I was a foreigner he remarked that there was a learned priest in the monastery who spoke French. I said I should like to speak

to the learned man who spoke French, and was taken to his room. It was the first time I had spoken with an Orthodox priest, and, knowing nothing of them, I was not surprised to find him an educated and a polished man. He told me that he had been an officer in the army and a Lutheran, and that, having recognized the claims of the Orthodox Church, he had submitted to them and been ordained. The case must, I think, be unique. He said that he was not a monk, but had received permission to live in the monastery. Pluming myself, without any justification, as was proved in the event, on the tact with which I was turning the conversation into an appropriate channel, I hazarded the opinion that the monks of the Lavra spent much time in study.

"No," said the priest, "we do not study."

I remembered reading that Orthodox monks lived a meditative life, and said that I supposed they were engaged in contemplation.

"I do not understand what you mean," he said.

I explained that I was under the impression that the monks spent much time in mental prayer.

"What is that?" he asked.

"Prayer without books," I said.

"Oh no," he answered; "we have services for all occasions."

Even these services are not followed intelligently. The Russian church books are filled with liturgical

writings of great beauty, but whether on account of the tedious length of the offices, or because of their great intricacy, even the actual officiants do not attempt to follow the whole of the rite. A bishop performs the ceremonies and recites the prayers incumbent on him, but he may sit down in the sanctuary and have a quiet chat with a priest, while the choir is singing some glorious hymn without the Royal Gates. Deacons may be seen gossiping and even laughing during service until it is their turn to take part in it. The reading of long portions of the Scriptures, with which the evening service is interpolated, affords an opportunity for congregation and clergy to relax, and nobody appears to attempt to listen to the rapid flow of words, which may continue a quarter of an hour. In religious houses the monks or nuns who are not conducting the service stand in the church without books, and make bows and cross themselves at such intervals as piety may suggest. They are not, so far as I have been able to discover, versed in the art of mental prayer, and their view of worship is physical rather than intellectual.

I like to think that my acquaintance with monks has been unfortunate. The careless are more likely to waste time gossiping with a foreigner than the recollected. There are doubtless Russian monasteries where the life is pure and the rule properly observed. Among the bishops, who are

all monks, are men of piety and learning. Antonius, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, is reputed to be a saint and famed for the severity of his life. The old Archbishop Palladius, his predecessor, lived in great magnificence and caused a royal sterlet to be served at his table every day. He wore rich robes of crimson or amethyst velvet, and passed through the streets in a coach and five, proudly blessing the people. Antonius lives austerely and wears a plain black robe. He abolished the coach and five, and, when he drives, only those who catch sight of his lofty white head-dress, with its cross of diamonds, know that the Metropolitan is passing. And it is not the asceticism of the Archbishop alone which has impressed his subjects; they have been touched by the tragedy of his life. He told it himself in a few words when they made him bishop: "My wife died, then my son died, and then my daughter died; so I knew that God wanted me to live for Him alone, and I became a monk." Russians are tolerant of bad Churchmen, because they know that they themselves are weak and remember that Churchmen are men of the same flesh and blood as themselves. Their tolerance does not make them lose grasp on the ideal, and they are eager to venerate the man who approaches it. Late one summer the icon of the Kazan Mother of God was borne along the Nevsky

Prospect to the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, where is the palace of Antonius, with many thousands in its train. When the people had left the Lavra not a rose nor a lily remained in the borders of the Archbishop's garden to bend to him as he passed. "Antonius is holy," the people had argued; "his flowers will be good to heal the sick," and they plucked every blossom.

Sometimes a monk arises who is at once an ascetic and a firebrand. The Humble Iliodor, once Prior of Tsaritzin and now in disgrace, was a man of this type. He first acquired notoriety by the publication of an article in a Moscow paper demanding the execution of Witte, who, he believed, had persuaded the Tsar to abandon part of his divine rights, and prescribing the ceremonies appropriate to an act which would celebrate the abolition of the constitution by the punishment of its maker. An enormous gallows was to be erected on the Red Place at Moscow, and that they might know the fate awaiting them if they trod in Witte's footsteps, the ministers and the nobles of the Empire were to be assembled round it. When all were in their places the traitor was to be led by a halter to the scaffold and hanged. By the violence of his language and the austerity of his life Iliodor exercised an unparalleled influence on the common people, and thousands flocked into Tsaritzin to listen to

his sermons in the open air. The fanaticism and the venom of the language in which he indicted Jews and all persons who held political views of a liberal kind, was so great that the Governor of Tsaritzin informed the Government that he could not be responsible for order in the city, and must resign if the Prior were not removed. The matter was so serious that the Ministry of the Interior felt it necessary to ask the Holy Synod to transfer the Humble Iliodor to another sphere, and that body, therefore, created him abbot of a country monastery where he would have little opportunity of doing mischief. Iliodor declined the honour, and when he was peremptorily ordered to accept it, appealed to the Tsar and took a solemn vow neither to eat nor to drink until he had received the Imperial permission to remain in Tsaritzin. His followers camped on the lands of the monastery to prevent the turbulent monk being taken away by force, and to pray that the Tsar might show clemency to a faithful servant. But the Tsar was silent, and the Humble Iliodor was driven by hunger to break his vow. His disciples remained at his side, and the Governor did not dare to order his removal for fear of bloodshed. Meanwhile pious ladies in St. Petersburg were pulling wires, and did so with such success that the Tsar was induced to order that the Prior should be left in peace to evangelize Tsaritzin. His triumph

was short. His harangues became more violent and more dangerous. In a few months the Tsar yielded to the urgent representations of the Government, and Iliodor was confined in a lonely monastery.

It is in the nature of things that I should have had less opportunities of acquainting myself with the lives and habits of nuns than with those of monks; indeed, I have only twice spoken to a Russian nun. Once in the courtyard of a nunnery I asked two nuns if I might take their photographs, and they said they must ask Mother, scurried away, and did not return; and once I had a little gossip with an old nun, the portress of the Nove Dyevitchy nunnery outside Moscow, an ancient place, famous in Russian history, surrounded with white fortifications topped with sixteen red towers. The old nun asked me if there were any nuns in England. I told her there were Catholic nuns in England.

"We have nothing to do with them," she said tartly, in the manner of an Orangewoman denying that she is a Papist, but she had the feminine curiosity to ask me what clothes they wore. That pleased me, and I did my best to satisfy her. She herself wore a loose black robe and a black shawl over her head, the dress of a lay sister. Choir nuns wear a similar robe and a cylindrical hat covered with a black veil which falls on the

shoulders. There is no touch of white to relieve the severity of this costume and a woman must be already a saint to put it on. In the great towns begging nuns, in short skirts and clumsy top boots, gather in the porches and outside the doors of churches. They stand in a row and each of them holds a small square of cardboard, covered in black stuff and embroidered with a cross, on which the charitable deposit alms for the support of the convents. These nuns are women of lowly origin. They remain at their posts hour after hour and bow humbly when given an alms.

The singing of Russian nuns is very beautiful. One afternoon in the shadowy church of the Convent of the Passion, in Moscow, I saw the black-robed sisters come out of the choir into the middle of the nave, where they stood in three rows, facing east, north, and south. The congregation, peasants and workmen and officers and fashionable women, pressed forward and stood behind them, while a young nun with a deep voice chanted prayers from an ancient folio which she read by the light of the taper she held. When she had done, the nuns sang an anthem. Their voices were fresh and melodious and the song they sang so lovely that in its flight it carried thoughts to the gate of paradise.

There are sometimes schools for girls in nunneries, but the nuns are supposed to devote

themselves chiefly to prayer and they do not leave their convents to perform charitable works. So far as I could learn, irregularities in nunneries are rare and discipline is better observed than in the monasteries of men. The sister whom Tolstoi loved, a woman who resembled her famous brother in many ways, although they reached the same end by divergent paths, was a nun. She had played a prominent part in the social and philanthropic life of St. Petersburg before she entered the cloister and made the great renunciation that Tolstoi himself put off until death was at hand. The old nun used to come to stay with her brother, and none of her relatives ever heard her betray any dissatisfaction at the life she had chosen. She loved music, and once when a musician was playing to Tolstoi she was heard to say to herself: "If only there was music in the convent; but they would not like it, they would not like it." And that was the only indication she ever gave that she regretted the life she had left. That she should have remained in a convent where God was not duly served is unthinkable.

The Orthodox Church prides itself on its conservatism, and those developments and modifications of Western monasticism which have so profoundly affected the course of religious history have no counterpart in the East. The rule of St. Benedict was the only monastic code known

to Saxon England, and the more ancient rule of St. Basil is the only rule known to modern Russia. No Francis, or Ignatius, or Philip Neri has arisen to mould the religious life in conformity to the needs of the age in which he lived. One exception to this statement must be made. It has been left to a royal lady, the daughter of an English princess, to give to the Russian Church a new type of monastic life. When the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the sister of the Tsaritza and the widow of the murdered Serge, resolved to take the veil, she did not enter a Basilian nunnery; she left her palace in the Kremlin and retired to a house, which she called the Convent of Mary and Martha, in a quiet part of Moscow, where she was joined by some twenty ladies, who assisted her in charitable works. In the spring of 1910, more than a year after the community had been in existence, a statement was published in the Russian press to the effect that she had made a vow of fidelity to the Orthodox Church in the presence of the Metropolitan Vladimir, and had received from him a cross in token of her office of Mother Superior. Princess Henry of Prussia, her sister, had been at the ceremony, in the course of which the Grand Duchess had been blessed with an icon of St. Nicholas and St. Alexandra, sent for the purpose by her youngest sister, the Tsaritza, and by the Tsar. Nobody in Moscow, where I

happened to be a few days after this ceremony had taken place, appeared to know its exact significance. I was told that the Grand Duchess devoted much time to the care of disabled soldiers, that the beautiful Princess Galitzin, who had joined the community, had visited her parents wearing a dress similar to that of Catholic nuns, that Princess Obolensky scrubbed the floors of the convent. People said that the whole affair was a whim of the Grand Duchess's, and she would doubtless tire of it in a couple of years. I was disinclined to believe this, and determined to find out the truth for myself. I therefore went to see the chaplain of the community, the Archpriest Metrophan Srebryansky, a man with a spiritual face and a gentle manner.

"The Grand Duchess shrinks from anything like publicity," he said, "and desires nothing better than to be allowed to work quietly and without attracting attention."

I had told him that I wished to write something on the subject, and I pointed out that English people were naturally interested in the life of a daughter of Princess Alice.

"Perhaps I may be allowed to tell you," he said, "that the Grand Duchess has left her palace for good. She lives here in four simply furnished rooms. Thank God, she is in excellent health. She lives severely and keeps the rule of the

community exactly like the other sisters. The sisters rise at seven, and at half-past seven office is said in the church. After this the sisters are engaged in various kinds of work until half-past twelve, when dinner is served. During the meal passages from the lives of the saints are read aloud. After dinner there is work, interrupted at five and seven by prayer. Supper is at half-past seven. The sisters manage a home for soldiers who have been disabled in the war, a hospital for poor women, and a home for consumptives; they also have a dispensary at which medicines are given free, and they conduct a free library."

"Have the sisters taken monastic vows?" I asked.

"The Grand Duchess and the Assistant Superior have taken the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience for life," said the priest very gravely; "the others have only been permitted to take vows for one year. If, at the end of the year, they desire to remain in the community, they can renew their vows for three years, then for six, and, finally, for life."

He added that it was possible that, in the course of time, a second house would be opened, where sisters who had grown old in the community might retire to end their days in prayer.

From this information it is evident that the Grand Duchess Elizabeth has done nothing less

than found a new religious order in the Russian Church, the life of which is modelled on that of the orders of Sisters of Charity existing in the West. The name she has given her community sets forth the ideal she has placed before it; she and her daughters in religion are the sisters of Mary and Martha, pledged to pray and to be busied about many things. Nobody but a member of the Imperial Family could have succeeded in founding such an order in Russia. As it is, the ecclesiastical authorities, who regard all Western religious practices with profound suspicion, are inclined to look askance at the innovations of the Grand Duchess. That her work will live, there can be no reasonable doubt. The Muscovites who thought it to be the passing whim of a royal lady were utterly wrong. It used to be said that the Grand Duchess was the most beautiful woman in Europe; she is still beautiful, but they tell me that her face is now the face of an ascetic.

I have said some hard things about Russian monasticism. What I have said has not been inspired by prejudice against a system, but by the desire to write of life as it is. Monasticism, like all beautiful things, liberty and the love of man and woman and the love of friends, is a tender plant that withers quickly if it be not cherished.

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE JEWS

THERE are 5,070,205 Jews in the Russian Empire. They have all the obligations of Russian citizenship and only part of its privileges. Except in certain cases, provided for by law, they are not allowed to live in the purely Russian provinces of the Empire and are obliged to keep within the Jewish pale. The existence of this singular law is capable of an historical explanation. At a time when the Jews were being harried in most countries of Europe, including England, the Poles, who had attained to a high degree of culture, afforded them a refuge, and they found protection and even privilege under the sceptre of the Polish kings. Wherever the standard with the White Eagle was planted, there the Jews gathered. They were free to live anywhere in the vast territory gradually acquired by Poland, which stretched from Galicia in the south through Lithuania to the shore of the Baltic and included the present western provinces of Russia. As Russia enriched herself at the expense of Poland,

WARSAW JEWS.

she found among her new subjects a multitude of Jews. She was forced to let them live in the new territories she had acquired, but she refused to change the law which forbade them to live in her ancient possessions. She has never abandoned this principle, and applied it when her power was extended in the south. Hence Jews are rarely seen in the small towns of north and central Russia, and the number of them in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other great cities is small.

Jews who are members of the first guild of merchants, those who have been in the employment of the State for twenty years, and certain others have the right to live in Russia proper. From time to time some incident reminds one of the severity with which the law is enforced. Three years ago, to give an instance, the highest legal authorities in Russia were called upon to decide whether a Jewish baby, aged four, had the right to live in Moscow. Its mother was a poor woman who gained a modest subsistence by nursing. Her right to live in Moscow was not disputed, but it was held by the Ministry of the Interior that it did not cover the case of her offspring. An order was therefore issued to have the baby dispatched to some place within the Jewish pale. The mother appealed to the Senate against the decision. The Assistant Minister of the Interior argued that according to law the

baby must be expelled. The Senate, however, laid down the principle that "the presence of young children with their parents depends not on the rights of the former but on the obligations of the latter," and the baby was therefore allowed to continue to toddle about Moscow. At what age it was to be sent to fend for itself within the pale was not defined. A tale told me by an Englishwoman may be repeated. She had been staying in Warsaw, and while there had received great kindness from a Jewess, a woman of education and culture. At the end of her visit the two ladies said good-bye at the railway station.

"And I hope you'll come and see me in St. Petersburg," said the Englishwoman.

"But I can't," said the Jewess.

The tears came into her eyes, and the Englishwoman realized that she had unwittingly made a very tactless remark.

It is in the nature of things that the law should be often evaded. Numbers of Jews contrive to settle in Russian cities and to remain by judiciously bribing the police. Occasionally the higher authorities wake up to the fact that persons are illegally living in a city and they are expelled. A less expensive and simpler means of securing the right to live outside the pale is to become Christian. Jews who abandon their faith for commercial or social ends usually become Lutherans, because, as

they say, it is the easiest religion. This course has only been open to them since 1905, when the Emperor granted his subjects religious liberty. Before that reform the law did not permit any Russian subject to leave the religious body to which he belonged, unless he desired to join the Orthodox Church. There was a singular exception to this rule: the Anglican chaplain at Warsaw had the right to baptize Jews. As members of the Orthodox Church they would be required to go to confession and to receive the holy communion once a year, and although they might submit to becoming nominal Christians, they shrank from the performance of these duties. Hence many Jews came every year to Warsaw to seek admission into the Church of England. In many cases they came from distant parts of the Empire; they professed an earnest desire to be baptized, and it can hardly have been possible for the chaplains to have distinguished between those who were convinced of the truth of Christianity and those who were insincere. They were instructed in the Christian principles and then baptized. When they returned to their homes they usually attached themselves to one of the Calvinistic bodies. Since the introduction of religious liberty the *raison d'être* for an Anglican chaplain in Warsaw has disappeared, and when I was there two years ago I found that he had

left the city. That some of these conversions were insincere may be seen from a story told me by a former chaplain of the British Factory in St. Petersburg, who did not enjoy the right given to his brother of Warsaw. Two prosperous-looking Jews called on him one morning, and one of them explained that the other desired to be admitted to the communion of the Church of England. He was told that it was impossible to baptize the man, as the chaplain would thereby break the law.

"My friend can make it worth your while," he urged, and, with that, the two were promptly shown the door.

They proceeded to attempt to negotiate the business with the verger.

"Do you think he would do it for two hundred roubles?" they asked.

"Well, then, for five hundred?" and they refused to be convinced that an English clergyman shrinks from simony until they were told that they could not buy baptism for fifty thousand roubles.

The story is more damaging to the Russian Government than to the Russian Jews. Injustice is the fertile mother of hypocrisy. A great body of men cannot be deprived of rights which their fellow-citizens enjoy without being profoundly affected; the Jews of Russia are in some ways

a forbidding people, but their physical and moral degeneracy is the result of oppression.

The obligation to live within the pale is not the only special regulation applied to the Jews. They are forbidden to possess land and they are not given the same educational privileges as other citizens. Only a small percentage of the pupils in the higher educational establishments of the country may be Jews. A large number of Russians are in favour of the emancipation of the Jews, but many people in St. Petersburg told me that if I went within the pale and saw what the Jews were actually like I should understand the undesirability of modifying the existing laws.

Cardinal Ferrari once told me that the prospect of Home Rule being established in Ireland filled him with joy. I told him that there were persons who held that Home Rule would not be to the advantage of the Church.

"I do not know enough about local conditions to tell whether that opinion is well founded or not," he replied; "the one thing I care for is liberty, and it is because I think that Home Rule will give greater liberty to Ireland that I shall rejoice to see it established."

That was very fine, and the spirit in which the Cardinal regarded the Irish Question is the one in which a man must go within the Jewish pale. He must be steadfast in principle and be for

ever reminding himself that liberty is one of the few things worth fighting for; otherwise he may be seduced into believing that to give liberty to the Jews would be a dangerous experiment.

As one passes over the melancholy plains of Poland one becomes conscious that the land is inhabited by two races, differing in features, dress, language, and religion. The handsome Polish peasants, trudging along the road or driving in country carts, greet one gravely with the words, "May Jesus Christ be praised." There are other wayfarers who stare at one gloomily and offer no greeting. Their strongly marked Semitic features leave no doubt as to their race. Their swarthy faces are unwashed, and they are dressed in long coats, reaching to the heels, like the *douillettes* of French priests, and on their heads they wear round black caps. They are usually travelling in great waggons, primitive omnibuses with curtains of coarse stuff in place of windows, and their appearance is repulsive. I knew a young Jew in St. Petersburg with the head of a Greek god, but most of the Jewish faces seen within the pale seemed to be of an exaggerated type, like the faces of Jewish prisoners on Assyrian monuments. In the little towns through which one passes in driving from one Polish estate to another, the Jewish inhabitants are sometimes eighty-five per cent. of the population. They are dirty, and

A POLISH PEASANT.

many of them look ill-nourished. The women are usually ugly and, when they are married, wear hideous wigs of coarse hair. There is no animation in the faces of the children. The boys, dressed like their elders in long black tunics and round caps, have a hang-dog expression. Some of the men and boys have a lock of hair hanging down on each side of the face. Once the motor in which I was travelling with a Polish friend was surrounded by a mob of these people, who accused us of having run over a child the day before. I remember that I found myself possessed with the fear of coming into physical contact with them. The language of the Jews is called jargon, pronounced *yargon*, debased German adulterated by some admixture of Polish words, and some of them make no attempt to talk either Polish or Russian.

This is, I am aware, an exceedingly disagreeable picture. Let me put a beautiful picture beside it, not an original, but a copy of one painted by a Russian official in a formal report issued by the Russian Government. The official had been sent to visit the settlements of Russian Jews in the Argentine. He sketched in glowing colours a picture of the change wrought in the colonists by the free and open life of the new land, and described with enthusiasm the rich farms possessed and admirably cultivated by former

children of the ghetto. One passage in particular pleased me. The writer drew a contrast between the peaky, timorous Jewish boys of the pale and the lusty Jewish youngsters, astride half-tamed horses, on the ranche. And the settlers spoke of Russia as home.

Yet Russia is a home in which the Jews are regarded as, and feel themselves to be, aliens. No Russian Jew calls himself a Russian until he is outside Russia. He calls himself a Hebrew (*Yevray*). As he is deprived of rights which his fellow-citizens enjoy, he is familiar with the idea that he is regarded as inferior and he has ended by acquiescing in it. I have more than once mistaken a Jew for a Russian, and the man has told me timidly, as though it were something to be ashamed of, that he is a Jew. Once I talked with a man for some time in a railway carriage, under the impression that he was a Russian, and I made some remark that I certainly should not have made had I thought he was a Jew. An expression of pleasure came over his face.

"Didn't you realize that I was a Jew?" he asked.

The tactlessness of my remark was more than compensated for by the fact that I had mistaken him for a Russian. Humility of this sort is vicious; it betokens loss of dignity and is the beginning of moral debasement.

It is not only because he is hampered by the law, but also that he is made to despise himself by the law, that the Russian Jew can be employed to do the dirty work that Russians and Poles prefer to leave alone. In the cities of the pale the pimps and ministrants to vice are usually Jews. If a gentleman desires to bribe the police or to corrupt the frontier guards, he employs a Jew as intermediary.

A nobleman, whose estate was near the Austrian frontier, spoke to me in high praise of the Jewish agent he employed. He was, it seemed, an invaluable person, and in proof of his resourcefulness I was told of his cleverness as a smuggler. His employer wanted some carriage wheels in a hurry. To get them from Warsaw would have taken some time and it was quicker to send into Austrian Poland for them; the objection to this course was that heavy duty would have to be paid.

"Leave it to me," said the Jew.

He ordered the wheels, bribed the guards maintained by the Russian Government at great expense to prevent contraband goods being brought across the frontier, and, not being of strong physique, employed them to trundle the wheels from the frontier to the very door of his employer's house.

The temples of Venus in Warsaw were financed

by Jews. The priestesses were their slaves, and if they wearied of the melancholy merriment of the worship, they were told they were free to go when the little bill for frocks and tawdry jewellery had been paid; but the bill presented by the Jewish proprietor was always so big that it never could be paid. One night, in the days when revolution was in the air, the young men of Warsaw entered the temples, smashed the mirrors and furniture of the elegant saloons, hurled chairs and tables out of the windows, trampled on the fiddles of the musicians, and freed the slaves. It was the only bit of Jew-baiting I have ever heard of that deserved praise.

It must not be thought that there are not many Jews who remain honest and upright men, in spite of a system that tends to debase them. They play an important part in the economic life of Poland and often enjoy the esteem and respect of their Polish neighbours. The country gentleman usually depends for his livelihood on the produce of his farms and his forests. He is a good shot, a hard rider, an excellent farmer and forester; but he is not a business man. The Jew acts as the middleman between producer and buyer, and it is he who negotiates the sale of the Polish landowner's corn and timber. He has become indispensable, and a foreigner is at first astonished at the frequency of his appearances

and the extent of his activities. One fine morning I left a Polish country house in great state with my host and hostess. There was the proper flutter of attention when the carriage and four whirled up to the railway station, but the greasy and obsequious Jew who approached us seemed out of the picture. He captured my host, and I saw the two sitting at a table in a waiting-room considering a portentous-looking document.

"What did Abraham want?" asked the Countess when we were in the train.

There was a bit of land to sell, Abraham had found a purchaser and had brought the deed of sale to be signed.

I was strolling along the road near his estate with a Polish friend. We met a Jew, and my friend greeted him.

"And what are you doing?"

"I am a tailor and I have come out from the town to see if I can get any orders from the farm-servants. Now I should like to see your orchard; I might feel inclined to buy it."

The impertinence of the fellow astounded me; I expected my friend would send him about his business in double-quick time. He did not, however, betray the least sign of astonishment, and merely replied that he did not desire to sell. The incident was explained a day or two later, when we were calling at a neighbour's house. The

hostess remarked that the Jew to whom she had sold her orchard had arrived that morning to beg her to excuse his paying for it, as it had yielded no fruit. I learnt that Jews make a bid for the produce of the country gentry's orchards early in the year. If the season is a good one they make a handsome profit by selling the fruit, and the owner of the orchard is willing to derive less benefit from it in order to be spared the trouble of negotiating with the fruit merchants or tradesmen. The Polish nobles are generous and usually do not insist on payment when the season is a bad one.

"The poor man said he would be ruined," explained the lady from whom I learnt these facts, "if I insisted on his paying, and of course I had to let him off."

This is an instance of the kindness which characterizes the attitude of the Polish gentry to the Jews. I have often had occasion to notice other instances of it. I was in the garden of a Polish house one afternoon when a Jewess with a crooked back hobbled in. She came to my host, caught hold of his hands and kissed them.

"We are great friends," he said, when she had left us. "Two years ago she came to me and said that she was very ill and must go into a hospital for an operation. She asked me to give her fifty roubles to pay the expenses. I refused to give her the money, but wrote to the Rabbi

to tell him that I would pay for her treatment; so she was sent to the hospital. When she had recovered from the operation she came to thank me and she brought me a message from the Rabbi. 'Thou shalt bear no more children,' he had told her, 'but thy benefactor shall have a son.' And the prophecy was fulfilled. We had been given no children, and this was a great grief to myself and to my wife. Less than a year after the Rabbi's prophecy our son was born."

It is not to be inferred from these trifling tales that the Jews are united with the nobility, or with the Polish, Lithuanian, and Little Russian peasantry, by bonds of affection. Differences of religion, language, character, and physical appearance, a by no means negligible factor in the situation, make intimate relations between the Christians and the Jews of the pale impossible. They cannot be welded into one race, and although they may co-operate in political and economic affairs, there is no probability of the gulf which divides the Christian society of the pale, high or low, and the Jewish society being bridged. The Jews owe a great debt of gratitude to the Polish people, but they have never made any effort to further Polish interests, and show a disposition to make common cause with the Russian rulers when they consider any advantage is to be derived from such a course. The actual hostility between Jew and Slav is

seen most clearly in the spring-time, when the chief religious festival of Jew and Christian alike falls. At Passover-time the fulfilment of ancient rites and customs seems to inspire the Jews of the cities with new fervour, and their hatred of Christians becomes apparent. The Jewish shop-keeper, who sinks religious differences in the interests of trade for the rest of the year, becomes surly, if not rude. The exercises of Holy Week recall sharply to the Christians that their Semitic neighbours are the descendants of the men who crucified the Saviour of the world. The evidence of racial hatred has at times been so strong that the clergy of Warsaw have found it necessary to preach on the subject and to use all their eloquence to make it clear that Jew-baiting is in flagrant contradiction to the principles of the gospel. These efforts have always been successful, and neither Poles nor Lithuanians have taken part in those massacres of Jews which, from time to time, have made Europe shudder. In one instance I was able to ascertain this by an inquiry made on the spot immediately after one of the worst of the pogroms. This was at Bielostok in June 1906. I spoke to numbers of Jews who had suffered during the massacre and I never heard a single complaint against the Christian inhabitants of the town. On the contrary, they all declared emphatically that Jews and Christians lived on

friendly terms, and several persons told me that they had been protected by Christians.

"Jews, Catholics, and Orthodox live here like brothers," said one Jew. The rector of the chief Catholic church said the same.

The Russian word pogrom, which has passed into the English language as a term for a Jewish massacre, means destruction. No word could express better the work done by the ruffians of Bielostok. They were not content to destroy life alone, but destroyed anything they could touch which belonged to a Jew. In one house they had visited they had even been at the pains to tear the paper from the walls. My visit to the town was the most painful episode of the year I spent in Russia. It is a manufacturing town with sixty-five thousand inhabitants, three-quarters of whom are Jews, set among pleasant fields, and there are many fruit trees on its outskirts. The place had a sleepy air when I arrived to find out for myself the truth about the massacre, and I was told that many of the inhabitants were remaining within doors for fear of a new outbreak of violence. I will not catalogue horrors, but give one or two incidents of the visit.

They took me to a little cottage in a garden, and a boy of fifteen ran out to meet me. He told me that his father had been killed. He had been with his parents and his seven sisters and

brothers in a neighbour's house, and a policeman had come and told them that some people had gone into their cottage and were destroying the furniture. His father had gone to see what was the matter and had been cut down by a soldier. The little fellow ran into the house and fetched his father's cap for me to see; the cloth was cut clean through by the murderer's sabre. Then he asked me to enter. The living-room, where his father had worked at the loom, for he was a weaver, was strewn with fragments of broken furniture, and in one part of the floor there was a dark stain.

"My father's blood," said the boy, with as little emotion as a beefeater displaying the spot on which queens were executed centuries ago.

What he had to say he said in a dull and colourless manner, and, while I felt unaccustomed tears coming into my eyes, his voice was dead and untouched by emotion. I remember I gave him a rouble and he ran away and put it in his mother's hand; then he darted off into a field behind the house, as if he wanted to be alone, and when he had gone some way he sat down on the grass. I followed him, because I wanted to give him a little coin for himself. I put it in his hand, and as he looked up to thank me the tears came into his eyes and he could not say anything.

I asked a girl named Bluma Lapidus to write

the story she had told me in my notebook. This is what she wrote :—

" We were all in the house when a mob rushed into the courtyard with some soldiers and shouted, ' Come into the court, all of you.' We did not know what to do and obeyed. When we got into the yard the hooligans set on us, and my two brothers, Max, who was twenty-one, and Aaron, who was twenty, were killed by them. The rest of us begged an officer, who was there, to save us, but he only shouted, ' Get away.' Then a soldier began to beat us with the butt-end of his rifle and we rushed away to escape. As we were going, my little sister, who was only thirteen, fell, and they killed her. When at last we were able to return, we found our home had been pillaged."

She and her father were sitting in the midst of the desolation made by the mob in their home.

The story could not be set out in a more matter-of-fact and less emotional manner. It is characteristic of all the stories I heard; they were told with such simplicity that, had there been no evidence of their truth, they would have carried conviction. As it was, the wards of the little hospital in the town and of the Jewish hospital in Warsaw, whither the most seriously wounded had been removed, contained incontrovertible evidence of the horrors of the pogrom. They were

like field-hospitals after a battle. As I went into one room of the Warsaw hospital a boy of sixteen, whose neck was swathed in bandages, sat up in bed and shouted for a knife. A nurse came to his bedside and asked him what he wanted it for.

"Only to cut my nails," he said.

The woman knew what use he had for a knife, and she gently laid the tortured body back on the pillows. They told me that the boy's name was Joseph Vart; he had been shot in the neck and could not live.

I went from bed to bed to listen to the stories of the wounded. This is how Sheina Kochan told her tale:—

"I am forty and I was at home with my husband when the mob came. He and my little girl ran out of the house and six or seven hooligans got in and began to knife me. They wounded me several times in the shoulders, but I managed to rush out into the street. A soldier shot at me and smashed my elbow, and I ran into a stable; my husband and the neighbours were looking for me everywhere. Then an officer came and helped me into a waggon and I was taken to the hospital."

A young man called Kalman Lunsky, whose head was bound up in bandages, told me that he had been in Warsaw when the massacre began, and feeling that he ought to be at his father's side, he disguised himself as a Polish peasant and

returned to Bielostok. Near the railway station some hooligans had shouted, "That fellow is not a peasant, he is a Jew," and, losing his nerve, Kalman had taken to his heels. The hunters were quickly after their quarry, and the fugitive fell to the ground with ten wounds in his head.

"I was so bad," he said, "that I could do nothing, and the police brought me into a yard; then they threw me on a dray piled up with corpses of the murdered. I was on the top, but others, still living, were underneath the dead bodies, and I could hear them saying that they could not breathe. They were suffocated. I asked a soldier to let me have a cab. He said that, as all the Jews were being killed, there would be nobody to pay for it. So I was taken with the dead to the hospital yard."

I might fill many pages with similar tales.

The respectable Christian inhabitants of Bielostok took no part in the pogrom; it was the work of soldiers, policemen, and the riff-raff of the town, always described by the sufferers as *hooligantzy*. But Russian soldiers and policemen do not butcher harmless people from sheer devilry, or because it has suddenly occurred to them that it might be useful or interesting. The soldiers I have had dealings with have been good-tempered fellows, and the Russian policemen are not surpassed by the English in urbanity. The massacre was a

deliberate act of vengeance. Policemen had been shot down in Bielostok by revolutionists, and, within the pale, the revolutionists were chiefly Jews. Murdered policemen, like murdered Jews, leave wives and children to cry their eyes out. Three policemen were shot in Warsaw in one day at the time I was at Bielostok; they were being daily sniped by revolutionists. Nobody stopped to consider that the murderers were clever men who usually made good their escape; they were Jews, and therefore Jews must expiate their crimes. Three days before the pogrom in Bielostok the chief of police, Dergatchoff, was assassinated. He was a good official and respected by the townspeople. The Jews asked permission to place a wreath on his grave. The permission was refused, and the curious reply was given to the deputation that sought it: "You will have your answer on Thursday." That day was the festival of Corpus Christi. The Catholics of the place went in procession through the streets with the Blessed Sacrament. To prevent their flocks from straying the Orthodox clergy arranged a rival procession, although Corpus Christi is not an Orthodox feast. The Russian procession was fired on and the police immediately raised the cry, "Down with the Jews!" and the massacre began. Bad Jews murder policemen, the police plan vengeance, *agents provocateurs* fire on Christians to give an

excuse for vengeance, the slaughter of good Jews follows. This is the tale of Bielostok, and from it the inference might be legitimately made that Jews were to blame for it. To leave the matter there would be grossly unfair. What drove Jews into the ranks of the terrorists? The question is an easy one to answer. Their exclusion from rights and privileges which their fellow-citizens enjoy made them the enemies of the Government and of its representatives. The success of the revolution meant freedom for the Jews, and hence numbers of Jews made common cause with the Russian terrorists. The ultimate cause of the Bielostok massacre was the system applied by the Government to the Jews. The abolition of that system and the granting to the Jews of the full rights of Russian citizenship will be not only an act of justice, but a reform which will uproot seeds of discord and of revolution.

# CHAPTER XIV

## A PEASANT RISING

On the journey from St. Petersburg to Revel I talked with a man who owned an estate in Esthonia.

"The peasants are in revolt," he said, "and many of the nobles have fled. I have sent my wife and children away, but I am returning to defend my property; I should think myself a coward were I to do otherwise."

This was in December 1905. Rumours had been circulated in St. Petersburg of bloody deeds in the Baltic provinces. Telegraphic communication had ceased, and there was a postal strike. I was on my way to Esthonia to find out for myself what was happening.

The stranger who arrives in Revel finds it difficult to remember that he is in Russia. The Gothic churches and ancient houses in the narrow streets are those of a north German town. In hotels and shops German is spoken and Russian is a foreign tongue. The better-dressed people in the streets talk German, and the workmen and peasants Esthonian, a language which sounds like

A CHÂTEAU OF THE BALTIC PROVINCES.

Finnish and bears no relation to either Russian or German. The Germans took possession of the west of the Baltic provinces less than a hundred and fifty years after the Norman Conquest of England, and Esthonia was sold to the Teutonic knights in 1346 by the Danes, who had held it for more than a century; but aborigines and conquerors have not fused into one race, and the lapse of centuries has not altered the relations between them. The Esthonians in the east and the Letts in the west of the Baltic provinces, encouraged by the spread of revolution in Russia proper, determined to make a bid for liberty. They did not rise against the Russian Government, but against the German nobility, and their battle-cry was: "Down with the Barons!"

Revel was peaceful as an English cathedral city, and Riga was said to be the headquarters of the rebels. I decided to go there, and was told that the railway men had struck and that I must make up my mind to remain in the town until they resumed work. The captain of a British tramp steamer was the *deus ex machina* to liberate me. He was taking a cargo from Revel to Riga and was willing to give me a passage. The Russian authorities, always willing to oblige a foreigner, gave me the necessary permission to leave on a foreign vessel, and the time before sailing was agreeably passed in the House of the Black Heads,

where a young German noble gave me a leisurely luncheon. The Black Heads are the oldest clubmen in Europe. Their house was built in 1532 and their club founded two hundred years earlier by merchants of Lubeck, who passed through Revel with merchandise on their way to the republic of Novgorod. The members were bachelors, and are said to have been called Black Heads because their hair was black, while that of their married friends turned grey. The explanation is so reasonable that another, which makes them derive their name from their patron saint, Maurice, whom they represented in images and pictures as a Moor, must certainly be rejected, although there are not wanting learned, if undiscerning, persons to support it. My Black Head, who was, as a matter of fact, blond, spoke of castles and country seats burnt to the ground by Esthonian peasants, and had much to say of the determination of the Germans to avenge themselves. Vengeance came six months later, when the Government sent Cossacks into the Baltic provinces and strung up six hundred rebels, selected for the purpose by the German overlords and hanged after summary trial by court martial, and, in some instances, without that formality.

The editor of an Esthonian newspaper, whom I saw later, was sanguine. He spoke of the regiments secretly on their side; one, it appeared, was

doubtful. The Germans were going. After seven hundred years of oppression Esthonia would be free.

Before leaving the town I went to the post office to dispatch a letter. It was impregnated with a hideous smell, and the amateurs who were managing it, in the absence of the employés on strike, apologized profoundly. A striker had just hurled a stink-bomb into their midst, or, to use a more elegant phrase, had made a chemical obstruction, but business, they explained, could be transacted as usual. They appeared to be greatly worried by their unwonted duties, but the Baroness who was selling stamps pursued her work with fortitude in the spirit of the motto of the Black Heads: "Aut vincendum aut moriendum."

There were half a dozen passengers, glad to find a means of getting to Riga, on the tramp steamer. The stokers lent us a pack of cards, grimed with coal dust, and we whiled away the time by playing a dull game of chance. The Russian official who boarded the boat when we had entered the harbour at Riga told us that the city was in the hands of revolutionists, that expropriators, armed with revolvers, were holding up people in the streets and robbing passengers in the trams. He advised us to conceal our money, and I put my notes in my socks, a precaution which proved to be unnecessary. The next morning I went to the castle, once the residence of the Grand Master

of the Knights of Livonia, to see the Russian Governor. He was a chatty little man.

"A la guerre, comme à la guerre," he said, when I apologized for presenting myself in travelling clothes. "The whole province is in rebellion, and I can do nothing. The soldiers at my disposal are required to keep order in the town."

Country gentlemen, in beautiful dress-coats and elaborately plaited shirts, were waiting in the antechamber to have audience. They had come with tales of the jacquerie in the countryside, and one of them told me that he sought permission to be enrolled in the police force in order to have fuller rights than a private person possessed to cope with the revolt in the neighbourhood of his estate and to protect his property. His Excellency was a leisurely person, and appeared disposed to let the elegant German nobles wait his pleasure while we smoked cigarettes and discussed the situation. He produced a St. Petersburg newspaper, which stated that the castle in which we were sitting was burnt to the ground and that the city was in flames. Nobody in the capital appeared to care whether Riga was burnt down or not; at any rate, the Government was doing nothing. It had its hands full at the time and possibly thought it not unwise to let the jacquerie deepen race hatred in the Baltic provinces. "Divide et impera" has ever been its motto.

"Go into the country and you will see the state of affairs for yourself," said the Governor.

That I had determined to do, and, as a first step, I went to a house in a mean street to present a letter of introduction I had received from the sanguine editor of Revel to a revolutionary leader. His wife, a young working woman with a baby, brought me into a kitchen and asked me to wait her husband's return. He proved to be a man of about thirty, with the eyes of a dreamer. He was very tall, his face was very pale, and his profile perfect; so was his manner. There was an air of romance about him, and I wondered what bond there was between him and the commonplace girl he had married. Our conversation was brief. I told him I desired to see the work of the revolutionists in the country, and he bade me go the following morning to one of his comrades, who would be able to help me. At nine o'clock the next morning I rapped at the door of the house he had indicated, a workman's cottage. A dour-looking woman opened, and I asked to see the man who, I hoped, would befriend me. He was not at home; she could not say when he would be at home; she knew nothing whatever about his movements. She eyed me so suspiciously that I did not believe a word she said, and proceeded to parley with her. After some debate she admitted me, and, as I had suspected, my man

was sitting within. They had taken me for a spy. There was no air of romance about him; he was a plain, working man, rough but not unintelligent.

"I am not going into the country to-day," he said, "but two orators who are going will be here in a few minutes and you can go with them."

The two orators were striplings, aged eighteen and seventeen respectively, with mild manners and the expression of Catholic seminarists. They displayed no signs of capacity for oratory or revolutionary agitation, but appeared to be the gentlest and most submissive creatures imaginable. They consented to take charge of me and said they were going to the funeral of a peasant who had been shot in a brush between revolutionists and a company of dragoons. I followed them to another house, where we found some young women twining a scarlet ribbon in a great wreath of immortelles, which was to be placed on the grave of the revolutionist. In company of an old peasant and a girl, who had been awaiting the agitators, we set off to the railway station. I hailed a sledge, a thing of graceful curves and bells and crimson cushions; the elder boy sat at my side, the other stood on the runners, holding on as best he could; and so merrily to the funeral. The people in the third-class carriage of the train that took us to the country appeared also to be

mourners, but they were in high spirits, raised still higher when some fifty persons, bearing black flags and scarlet flags, were seen waiting to join us at a wayside station. It was proposed to hoist a red banner, painted with revolutionary mottoes, on the engine. The driver refused permission and the point was not pressed. Somebody stood on the little platform behind one of the carriages with the banner, and we passed slowly over the white country with the emblem of revolution floating above us. Everybody was armed. Most had revolvers and a few had rifles. They showed each other their weapons with the glee of children with new toys. A girl took a pistol, which looked as if it would not go off, out of her pocket and handled it with evident satisfaction. My mild little friends had terrific mausers. A man with a face like a pig's sat opposite me ; I thought of myself in a great bed in the house of one of the nobles, of waking in the night to find him bending over me with a knife. These people were not playing at revolution ; they were determined to drive out the German overlords, and the day before a woman had told me that ten châteaux belonging to members of her family had been burnt to the ground. I had seen a train leave Riga for the German frontier crowded with people, thankful to get even standing room, fleeing from the terror. An elderly woman, who had the

appearance of a great lady, stood on the platform with tears pouring down her face, fearing that she would be unable to find room in the train and would be cut off from escape. My strange comrades' confidence of success was pathetic; they were so intent on their German prey that they seemed to have forgotten that the Baltic provinces are part of the Russian Empire. No Government can allow lawlessness to go unpunished, and I thought, as I listened to the gay chatter of the insurgents, of the time when the Government would crush them.

Half an hour's journey from Riga we left the train at a little station in the midst of fields, and trudged across the snow for a quarter of an hour, until we came to a building near which some two hundred sledges were standing. It was an assembly hall and the rendezvous at which the country people who desired to show respect to a fallen peasant had assembled. The company soon set out in the direction of the village of Linevaden, where the funeral was to take place. I drove with a prosperous peasant farmer, whom I suspect to have come less from sympathy with the malcontents than from policy. The procession was headed by about a hundred persons on foot, and the black and the red banners streamed above them in the icy wind. Whether they went across fields or along a road nobody who was

THE CHURCH OF LINEVADEN.

unfamiliar with the country could say; for the undulating plain was covered so thick with snow that distinctions of meadow and roadway were lost beneath its white covering. The sledges followed the people on foot, but many of them were driven wide of the procession, and the prosperous farmer chose any cuts that seemed shortest. At first the people sang, and when their doleful song was ended there was a great silence; for the snow muffled the sound of the footsteps of men and horses alike, and we passed softly beneath the leaden sky to the church of Linevaden, a grey and ancient building with a square tower, which might have been the parish church of an English village. We entered to the sound of solemn music, and, as the nave was crowded, I was taken to the west gallery, where were the organ and the places for the choir. The peoples of the Baltic provinces rejected Catholicism and embraced Protestantism in the sixteenth century. The building in which I found myself, built for the old worship, had been for more than three centuries in the possession of the Lutherans. It was a place perfumed with rural prayers; a painted crucifix and images of Our Lady and St. John stood on the rood-beam of the chancel arch. The coffin of the peasant who had been killed by a dragoon was in the midst of the chancel; many candles burnt around it, and the

bearers of the scarlet and the black banners took their places near it. Beyond was a communion table, covered with a red cloth, and on it were two lighted candles.

The music of the organ, the stillness of the congregation, the yellow blades of flame flickering in the grey light of a winter morning, made one attend the moment when a clergyman would enter to do his melancholy office. But no clergyman came, for the pastor had fled. He was not beloved by his parishioners, and they subsequently murdered him. God rest his soul; he was doubtless a worthy man, whose chief offence was that he was a German. The clergy and the landed gentry of the Baltic provinces are of the same race, and stand or fall together.

The people in the pews, a sombre northern crowd with no touch of colour in belt or kerchief, watched the elder of my young friends of the gentle manner ascend the pulpit, and showed no sign of resentment at his intrusion into their pastor's place. The boy's face was pale, and the congregation lent forward as he prepared to speak. In a flash he was transformed from a drooping boy to a man charged with a message of life and death. His voice rang through the church, fierce and impassioned. He spoke in Lettish, a language with which I am unacquainted, but the recurrence of the word Baron and the fierceness of his manner

led me to suppose that he was denouncing the foreigners who had held the people of the land for centuries in subjection. The peasants listened to him as though he had been an angel from heaven. He spoke for perhaps twenty minutes, then his voice sank to an exhausted whisper; he made a gesture that seemed to indicate that stress of emotion forced him to end, and disappeared from the pulpit. There was a movement of dismay among the people in the pews, and, for my part, I thought the lad had turned faint. Our agitation was testimony to histrionic ability, for there was nothing whatever amiss with the boy, and he quickly reassured us by telling us in stentorian tones to sing a revolutionary song. A difficulty presented itself; the organist did not know the tune. Somebody in the congregation was found to play it, and the people sang with fervour. The song brought the service to an end, and the congregation pressed out to go to the cemetery. I drove there with the prosperous peasant, and, as we had some time to wait before the coffin arrived, we went into the sexton's house. There were several men in the kitchen, and in the midst was a great stove. I took off my boots and sat with the soles of my feet against the hot side. After a little the mistress of the house, a sour-faced old woman, arrived. She looked at me in a sinister manner and snarled

the question, "Are you a baron or a dragoon?" In saying that she snarled I am not guilty of an affectation. Her manner and her mien were those of the stage hag in a melodrama of the French Revolution. That woman would have stopped at nothing. It was explained to her that I was a harmless individual, and she did not order me to be shot. She merely gave a grunt, and I continued to warm my feet at her stove.

When the coffin was brought to the gate of the cemetery we followed it to the grave. The younger orator harangued the mourners with the same confidence and fervour his comrade had shown in the church, and revolutionary songs were sung to hymn tunes. The relatives of the dead man did not appear to find consolation in these rites. Three women with dishevelled hair and tear-stained faces stood by the grave and howled. Their wailing did not cease as men began to fill up the grave with earth, and they were still sobbing when a great wooden cross was brought and placed at the head.

"We wanted to fire a volley over the grave," said one of the peasants to me, "but we thought it might frighten the cows."

He told me that the Baron of Linevaden was good. This gentleman had no right to the title, but as most squires in Livland happen to be barons, the peasants give the title to all. My

friends the prosperous peasant and the local postman decided that I must be taken to see their Baron, and we went to his château, a rambling country house of two storeys. We met him and his agent, an elegant young man, at the gateway. The Baron was a pleasant-looking man of about thirty-eight, and carelessly dressed. He received me with chilling politeness, asked the three of us to come into the house, and led the way to a large and beautiful room, sparsely furnished with great taste and ornamented with groups of plants and exotic flowers. The room had been copied from a salon at Versailles, the agent told me later. No place could have been more appropriate for the narration of the remarkable tale the Baron told me. The postman and the prosperous peasant had neglected to say who I was, and I therefore gave some account of myself and of the reason of my visit. The Baron's manner at once altered.

"I took you to be a member of the Socialist Committee in Riga, come to demand new concessions to the peasants," he said, and began to talk about Robert Hitchens, whom he had met in Africa.

"We were in the garden of Allah together," he said, "and I have a copy of the novel he sent me."

We were friends at once, and, leaving the agent

to talk to the other two, he told me that a few weeks earlier he had heard that the peasants were going to attack his house, and had found it advisable to take his sister, and, together with his agent, to cross the river at the bottom of the gardens into Courland, and make for a place of safety. After a fortnight he had returned and found ten ladies and their servants had been brought to his house by the peasants and held there as prisoners. Their homes had been sacked, their menfolk conveyed to another château, and they, with no knowledge of the fate that awaited them, and with thoughts of the French Revolution in their hearts, had been sent to Linevaden.

A member of the Socialist Committee in Riga, which was practically in control of the city, had told me how beautifully the revolution was being conducted. It would be as effectual, he pointed out, as the French Revolution in ridding the land of the aristocracy, but it was being conducted in a modern and enlightened manner, and no blood would be shed. It was easy enough for him to talk in Riga; the clever Letts and still cleverer Jews who were directing the revolution were unable to control the peasantry. At Linevaden, the Baron told me, the ladies imprisoned in his château had been brought out on to the terrace and told by the peasants that they were to be shot. They showed the same splendid courage

as did the great ladies of the revolution that was successful. One of them, a woman of great beauty, harangued the crowd, and to such purpose that the captors sent the prisoners back to their rooms, where they had to remain, expecting every moment, day and night, that the call to death might come. Thus they remained for nearly a fortnight, until the owner of the house, who was not disliked by the peasants, came back and discovered them. He knew that his influence with the country people was sufficient to prevent them harming the guests that had been thrust upon him, provided the Governor of Riga did not hear of their distress and send soldiers to rescue them. The peasants were on the alert, and if they found Cossacks approaching the village their blood would be up and the lives of the ladies not worth a minute's purchase. He was aware of the power of the Socialist Committee in Riga, and of its desire to make the revolution a bloodless one, and he therefore wrote a polite note to the President, requesting him to send somebody to Linevaden to free the prisoners. With this letter he enclosed another to the Governor, warning him not to send soldiers, and he asked the directors of the revolution to send it to the castle. Both requests were complied with. The letter was sent to the Governor, and two members of the Committee came to Linevaden and

told the peasants to allow the ladies to go to Riga.

In the house of an Englishman in Riga I met two ladies whose châteaux had been burnt down. One of them was an Irishwoman, who had married a German baron. She had lost everything and was penniless. There was a look of dull despair in her face. The other woman was a mere girl, who had been married but six months. She had arrived the day before from abroad, and hardly seemed to realize the calamity that had befallen her. Upstairs lay her husband, so ill that he had not been able to give a connected account of his escape from death. All we knew was that he had had Cossacks to protect his château, that ammunition had failed, and that they had left for a new supply. The peasants had discovered that they were gone, and the defenceless owner learnt that his house was to be burnt and he himself killed. He determined to make a dash for life, had a sledge harnessed, and drove like the wind in the direction of Riga. The peasants had foreseen his plan and barricaded the road. They turned him out of his sledge, stripped him of his clothes, and turned him into the snowy forest. How he had reached the city he had not been able to say.

After the Baron of Linevaden had told me his tale, the postman took me to his house for tea,

and after I had eaten many slices of bread and butter, for I was famished, having eaten nothing since early morning, he announced that I was to see how Lettish peasants live. He took me across fields until we came to the ruin of an Italian palace with rows of slender columns. A month before it had been inhabited; but the peasants living beneath its shadow had set fire to it, and the owner and his family and his servants had fled. Near the ruined palace was a large wooden building of one storey. It was the home of five families, and when I entered it, I was given a key to understand all that I had seen and heard during the day.

A dim light burned in the first room we entered, and I saw a hopeless-looking woman mixing potato and flour in a bowl for the evening meal. On the table before her was a lamp with a tiny flame that gave no more light than a farthing dip. After a few moments I saw that dark shadows on the floor were the bodies of children, who were crawling about like animals. The walls of the room were covered so thick with brown beetles that they looked as if they had been spread with some glistening lacquer. There were four other rooms in the house. Each of them was the home of a family. In all of them were many children, and the grown-up people looked half nourished, and there was despair in their faces. A man took

me to see the common kitchen. There were five little stoves, like stools, with tops about two feet square and a hole for fire. The man picked up a handful of twigs.

"This is the wood our Baron gives us to warm ourselves with," he said.

In return for his wretched home, a little plot of land, firewood, and bread, the peasant must work for the overlord, perhaps two, perhaps three, days in the week. His wife must go to the great house to scrub floors and do such rough work as is demanded of her. The Lettish peasant and the Esthonian peasant is half a serf. If his lord be good, his life may be bearable; but the lord may treat him as a dog and give him such dens as I had seen to live in.

"Madam," I said to a great lady I met in Riga the following day, "you would not put your horses to live in such places."

"I would not let my pigs live in them," she said.

The Russian peasant is an independent man and his home a palace in comparison to that of many of the peasants of the Baltic provinces.

The great lady said helplessly that it was so difficult to do anything for the peasantry; the people, it appeared, were too degraded.

They had lost hope, but it came to them with the revolution in the heart of Russia, and they made a bold effort to rid themselves of oppressors. They failed. Nothing in the Baltic provinces is changed.

## CHAPTER XV

### "CHRIST IS RISEN!"

ANNA MIKHAILOVNA is all in white, and in her hat is a garland of flowers, for it is Easter Eve. She is a woman with many cares, busied with the affairs of her household; but it is restful to be with her. Her guests bring her roses and lilies to make the house sweet for the feast. She has lit the lamp before the icon with which her parents blessed her twenty years ago when, a girl of eighteen, she knelt on the great pelisse spread on the floor to receive their benediction before her marriage. She has seen that the paschal cake of cream and fruit, and the great loaves of sweet bread, and the bright-stained eggs are ready against our return from the church.

Every year the same friends meet in Anna Mikhailovna's house, hard by St. Isaac's Cathedral, to go to the Easter service together. A little before eleven we leave the house. The night air is fragrant with the spring, and in the lilac sky stars are shining. Within the great church it is dark and silent, but by the faint light of a few

EASTER BELLS.
(From a Russian picture.)

tapers burning round the silver sepulchre raised up beneath the dome, we can see that the nave is crowded by a vast throng of people. They stand motionless, expectant, men in rough clothes and high boots, women with kerchiefs on their heads, waiting to hear the greeting angels gave to the Magdalene on the first Easter morning. Most of them are fasting, and few of them have tasted meat or fish or eggs during the week, and I feel half ashamed at being allowed to stand in a crowd of fashionable people near the altar. Down there in the nave the exhausted crowd seems touched with mystic fervour and a longing to hear the story of the Resurrection told again; near the sanctuary it seems uncertain whether one is in church or at an evening party. The clergy have thoughtfully provided hat-stands and lacqueys to take our coats.

Anna Mikhailovna does not seem to notice the people round her. She bows low and crosses herself as she prays. Pavlik, a great tall schoolboy of nineteen, and I talk a little, and then I leave him and pass by a side door into the sanctuary, a spacious place shut off from the rest of the church. A few men are standing against the walls—no woman may enter—and boys in cloth of gold and priests are moving about. The Bishop sits motionless on a stool by the Royal Gates. Deacons come to him with a heaped-up pile of

golden tissue; they clothe him in a long white robe of silk, embroidered at the hem with gold; curiously fashioned garments bordered with needlework of blue and scarlet flowers are given him, and the dalmatic of the Eastern emperors; he assumes a golden mitre glittering with jewels, and lo, a figure which might have stepped from an ancient mosaic.

And when I return to Anna Mikhailovna and her friends somebody remarks that Pavlik ought to be in the procession. He shakes his head, and says that nothing would make him join it; but his dark eyes sparkle with pleasure. Narcissus goes away to confer with an acolyte in the sanctuary, and returns with a long garment of cloth of gold. We get the delighted, but still protesting, Pavlik, into it. Anna Mikhailovna produces a pin to fasten it at the neck, and he goes to join the clergy with the air of a dandy of the Byzantine Court. Presently he comes smiling from the sanctuary with an ancient silver lantern to light the way of his Holiness Kyril, attended by a train of golden priests and deacons, and by youths with golden fans on which the wings of cherubim are graved.

The procession disappears in the gloom of the nave, and then emerges into light as the Bishop ascends the stage beneath the dome to look into the silver sepulchre. There is nothing there;

he leaves it and is again lost in the darkness on his way out of the church to look for the body of the Lord.

For half an hour we await his return. Suddenly the cathedral is flooded with dazzling light, the bells overhead ring out, the thunder of cannon in the fortress is heard, and we know that the prelate has returned with the good news : " *Christos Voskresye !* " (Christ is risen !). The golden chandeliers above our heads glow with a thousand lamps, high in the dome is a circle of quivering light, and a riot of fire sweeps quickly up the church, as each man lights his taper from his neighbour's, and the fire passes from man to man, until a yellow blade of light is trembling in every hand.

By the silver tomb, now the sign of triumph, the choir sings the Easter hymn. For nigh on an hour the lovely chant floats beneath the dome, while the Bishop, and then each of the priests, come up the church and through the Royal Gates to perfume the holy place with incense.

Presently the faint tinkle of the golden bells sewn to the hem of his vestment tells us that Kyril is about to pass with the Easter greeting. He comes, a stiff figure from another age; in his hand is a little censer of silver, and he says in a deep voice, " *Christos Voskresye !* " We bow, and he goes on his way greeting all whom he passes.

I turn to kiss the hands of Anna Mikhailovna and of her daughter. "Christ is risen!" I say, and they reply, "He is risen indeed." Then Pavlik comes to me and we kiss three times. A deacon comes from the sanctuary to kiss his wife and daughter. It is a holy kiss, the kiss of Easter night. In the palace two common soldiers approach the Tsar that he may kiss them in sign of brotherhood in Christ, and masters and mistresses must kiss their servants when they give them the Easter greeting.

The fashionable people begin to go, but the workmen and peasants in the nave will remain until the liturgy is over at half-past three in the morning. I see Narcissus bring a silver goblet from the sanctuary. It is a present of hot wine from one of the clergy to Anna Mikhailovna, and we each sip it, a welcome refreshment in the stifling heat. The air is heavy with the perfume of incense, laden with the lovely sound of holy music; but an hour before the ceremony is done we leave the church, and so home through the radiant dawn to break the fast.

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